

What are the symptoms of CO poisoning?

Symptoms include headaches, dizziness, tiredness and nausea (feeling sick). Some of these symptoms can be mistaken for flu and other common viruses, or even food poisoning. If someone in your household suffers from these symptoms while they are at home but feels fine elsewhere, they may be suffering from CO poisoning.

What to do if you have symptoms of CO poisoning

If you think you are suffering from CO poisoning, open the windows and then get out into the fresh air immediately. If the symptoms are serious, you should go straight to your doctor or to a casualty department.

Because these symptoms are so common, they may not be diagnosed as CO poisoning. If you feel CO poisoning is a strong possibility, tell the doctor or medical staff why you think this might be.

The only way to confirm CO poisoning is by a test specially for this purpose. This could be a breath test, or a special light probe placed on your finger or a blood test. There is no other way of diagnosing CO poisoning. The levels in your blood start to fall once you are breathing clean air, so you should get tested as soon as possible.



We are currently looking for volunteers to help in a variety of duties ranging from secretarial to publicity. Volunteers can be people any age with some time to spare.

We support victims poisoned by CO and their families and friends. We also try to raise awareness of the dangers of CO among health professionals and the general public. We are an independent charity and do not recommend any single manufacturer or product.

If you would like to learn more about our work or if you would like to help CO victims, we would love to hear from you.

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Registered Charity Number 1125755

CO-Awareness Week is the third week in November. See our website for this year's venues www.COvictim.org

If you would like to sponsor this leaflet and have your logo added here, please contact the charity.

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Trust in us to help you understand the effects of carbon monoxide (CO)

Carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning

CO is the chemical formula for carbon monoxide.

www.COvictim.org

What is CO poisoning?

Carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning can be fatal or cause permanent damage to your health. CO is produced when carbon fuels don't burn completely. It has no smell or taste and, in large quantities, it can kill very quickly.

Where does CO come from?

CO can be produced in any fuel-burning appliance that is not properly maintained. Sources can include cookers, heaters, gas tumble dryers, hot-water heaters and fireplaces. Danger signs that CO may be leaking include:

- yellow or orange flames where there should normally be blue ones; and
- sooty stains on the walls around fires and water heaters. You could also be poisoned by CO if you share a wall or chimney with a house that has a CO leak, even if your own house does not have one.

Who is at risk of CO poisoning?

Anyone can be poisoned by CO. However, some individuals are more at risk than others. These include young children, the elderly, students, people with anaemia and those with heart and lung diseases. And pregnant women risk damage to their unborn child from CO.

Use this list to check for CO leaks

1 Check the colour of the flames in your appliances. If they are orange, there may be a problem. Whatever the colour, you should get your gas appliances checked every year.



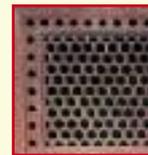
2 Make sure your chimney flue isn't blocked. If you have birds nesting in it, remove the nest and then fit a guard to stop them nesting in future. If you have plants growing up your outside walls, make sure they aren't blocking the flue. It is very important to get your chimney flue checked.



3 Do you have an eye level gas grill? These can be particularly dangerous so check yours is working properly. Older cookers can cause problems so use the electric toaster instead. Get your cooker checked now!



4 Is there enough ventilation in your home? Check that any airbricks aren't blocked. If your windows are double-glazed your appliances may not have enough air and they could produce CO.



5 When were your appliances last checked? Get them checked every year – don't leave it to chance. Use only qualified engineers and ask to see their ID cards. They must be registered with one of the following organisations.



- **Coal Advisory Service** phone: 028 9075 1002
- **Gas Safe Register** (gas) phone: 0800 408 5500 www.gassaferegister.co.uk
- **NAPIT** (NI)(solid fuel and oil) phone: 0845 543 0330
- **The NI Association of Chimney Sweeps** www.niacs.co.uk for local listings
- **OFTEC** (oil) phone: 0845 6585 080
- **NI Gas Emergency** phone: 0800 002 001

6 Do you suffer from any unexplained illnesses such as tiredness, muscle pains, upset stomach, dizziness and headaches? If you do, go to your doctor and ask for a carbon monoxide test. Go straight to the doctor because the CO in your blood will soon drop once you are outside and your doctor may not detect it.



7 Are you a tenant? If you are, you should have a safety certificate from your landlord. And the law states that your landlord should check the appliances in your home every year. Has your landlord fitted a CO alarm? If not, get one yourself. Landlords who are found guilty of neglect may be fined or even sent to prison.



8 One important thing you can do to protect yourself and family is to get a CO alarm approved to BS EN 50291:2001. Fit it as the maker says to. Check it regularly, a CO alarm is not a substitute for regular and correct maintenance.

