



Prevention is Best Treatment For Carbon Monoxide Poisonings

Did you know that a killer could be lurking in your home or car right now? The problem is, this killer can strike without ever being seen, heard or smelled.

Each year, carbon monoxide poisoning kills nearly 500 people nationwide and sickens thousands more. The CDC ranked Nebraska as the state with the highest reliable mortality rate from carbon monoxide. In 2008, the Nebraska Regional Poison Center received 214 calls concerning carbon monoxide. In 2009, we surpassed that number. More troubling is the fact that this figure can be misleading because carbon monoxide poisoning is often under reported. It is imperative that the citizens of Nebraska understand the dangers, the symptoms and how to prevent poisoning from carbon monoxide.

Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning include sleepiness, headache, dizziness, blurred vision, nausea, shortness of breath and convulsions. The first step in treating carbon monoxide poisoning is getting the victim to fresh air. Then, seek medical attention immediately.

Carbon monoxide is a gas produced when fuels burn incompletely. It has no color, taste or smell. The major causes of carbon monoxide poisoning include:

- Using heating equipment that is in poor repair.
- Lack of ventilation in a car.
- Using a charcoal grill indoors.
- Using unvented space heaters.

When fresh air is available and fuel is burning properly, there is little danger of carbon monoxide poisoning. However, operating an internal combustion engine or a poorly adjusted fuel-burning appliance in a closed area without proper ventilation can become fatal.

The Nebraska Regional Poison Center offers the following suggestions to help prevent carbon monoxide poisoning:

- Inspect all fuel-burning equipment yearly.
- Vent fuel-burning heaters to the outside.
- Do not use a gas range or an oven for heating a room.
- Never use a charcoal grill or hibachi inside.
- Install carbon monoxide detectors on every level of your house.
- Never leave a car running in an attached garage, even with the garage door open.
- Have the vehicle muffler and tailpipes checked regularly.

The Nebraska Regional Poison Center offers tips on carbon monoxide poisoning prevention as a free community service. If you suspect carbon monoxide poisoning or if you have any questions, contact the Nebraska Regional Poison Center at (402) 955-5555 in the Omaha metropolitan area or toll-free at 1-800-222-1222 (in Nebraska and Wyoming).