

Carbon monoxide poisoning

Fact sheet

What is carbon monoxide?

Carbon monoxide is a poisonous gas that you can't see, taste or smell. It is produced from burning fuels like gas, wood and charcoal, even if there is no smoke.

Some devices make carbon monoxide and should never be used indoors, including outdoor heaters and barbeques, tools with gasoline engines and vehicle engines.

When does carbon monoxide poisoning occur?

Carbon monoxide poisoning often occurs when people use outdoor devices indoors or in a closed space without enough air flow.

What are the common sources of carbon monoxide?

Common sources of carbon monoxide include:

- barbeques, charcoal briquettes/beads and grills
- outdoor heaters
- gas lanterns
- tools with gasoline engines (such as pressure washers or concrete saws)
- car or boat engine exhausts
- generators.

What are the symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning?

Common symptoms include:

- headache
- nausea and stomach pain
- vomiting
- dizziness
- weakness

- fainting
- confusion
- tiredness

In severe cases, symptoms can include:

- loss of consciousness
- seizures
- permanent brain injury
- death

Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning gradually get worse the longer you breath in the gas.

Who is at risk?

Carbon monoxide poisoning can affect anyone. People at higher risk include:

- babies
- pregnant women and their unborn babies
- elderly
- people with chronic medical problems, like heart disease.

How do I prevent carbon monoxide poisoning?

- Only use barbeques, charcoal briquettes/beads or grills, outdoor heaters or gas lanterns outside. They can produce carbon monoxide even if there is no smoke.
- Only use generators outside and make sure the generator is not near a window or door and is pointed away from the house.
- Do not leave your car running in the garage (even when the garage door is open).
- Only use fuel-powered appliances (such as pressure washers or concrete saws) outside, or in well ventilated spaces.
- Only use approved indoor heaters inside for warmth and have them serviced at least every 2 years by a registered gas fitter. If you use this type of heater, consider installing a carbon monoxide detector alarm.

What are other ways to heat my home this winter?

Check out these websites for tips on how to keep warm and safe this winter:

- [Energy.gov.au – Household guide for winter](https://www.energy.gov.au)
- [Energy.gov.au – Heating and cooling](https://www.energy.gov.au)
- [YourHome.gov.au – Heating and cooling](https://www.yourhome.gov.au)

What do I do if I think someone has carbon monoxide poisoning?

Call the Poisons Information Centre on 13 11 26 for advice 24/7

If English is not your main language and you need an interpreter, call TIS National on 131 450 and ask to be transferred to the Poisons Information Centre.

In an emergency, call Triple Zero (000)

Do not put yourself in danger when helping others. If someone has collapsed inside from carbon monoxide, go outside to call Triple Zero (000).