What is carbon monoxide?
Carbon monoxide (CO) is a colorless, odorless, tasteless gas. It is produced when fuels such as gasoline, fuel oil, propane, kerosene, natural gas, coal and wood do not have enough oxygen to burn completely.

What are the most common sources of carbon monoxide?
CO is most commonly produced by equipment such as cars, furnaces and boilers that have not been properly maintained or serviced.

What are the leading causes of carbon monoxide poisoning?
Inhaling smoke from fires is the most common form of CO poisoning. Cigarette smoke and car exhaust are the largest sources of frequent CO exposure.

What about carbon monoxide detectors?
The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) recommends consumers purchase and install carbon monoxide detectors that sound an alarm when the level of carbon monoxide is high enough to be dangerous. (UL2034). Each home should have at least one carbon monoxide detector outside each bedroom. At no time should a CO detector be seen as a replacement for proper use and maintenance of your fuel-burning equipment.

What should I do if I suspect carbon monoxide poisoning?
• Get into fresh air immediately. • Call the Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222.

What are the symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning?
Symptoms often are mistaken for those of the flu. They include:

• Severe headaches • Vomiting • Sleepiness • Nausea • Dizziness

Unlike flu symptoms, there is no fever with CO poisoning. Symptoms tend to clear up when people go outside and breathe fresh air. Children and the elderly may show symptoms earlier, and pregnant women are at a higher risk for CO poisoning.

Carbon monoxide seasons

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How to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning

- Have your car and all fuel-burning appliances in your home regularly inspected and maintained.
- Never leave a car running in an attached garage.
- Keep your car’s tailpipe clear of snow and other obstructions.
- Never burn a charcoal grill indoors or in a garage.
- Don’t sleep in any room with an unvented gas or kerosene space heater.
- Keep appliance exhaust vents clear of snow and ice.
- Don’t use a gas oven to heat your home.
- Don’t use gasoline-powered engines (lawn mowers, snow blowers, etc.) in enclosed spaces, such as inside houses, garages, sheds, etc.
- Keep all chimneys and flues free of waste and in proper working order.

Carbon monoxide sources in your home

Adding insulation without checking to see if extra ventilation is needed.

Blocked chimney opening.

Clogged chimney.

Cooking appliances used for heating.

Leaking pipe of wood stove.

Disconnected vent pipe on water heater.

Unvented portable heater.

Vehicle running for extended length of time.

Barbecue grill used indoors.

Improper modifications to furnace, outside of manufacturer’s recommendations.

Clue: Fallen soot from stove.

Clue: Fallen soot from furnace or chimney.

Clue: Soot or heat marks on appliances.

Clue: Excess moisture on inside of windows, also can be caused by a single appliance (water heater) connected to a chimney.