

Carbon Monoxide



What Is It?

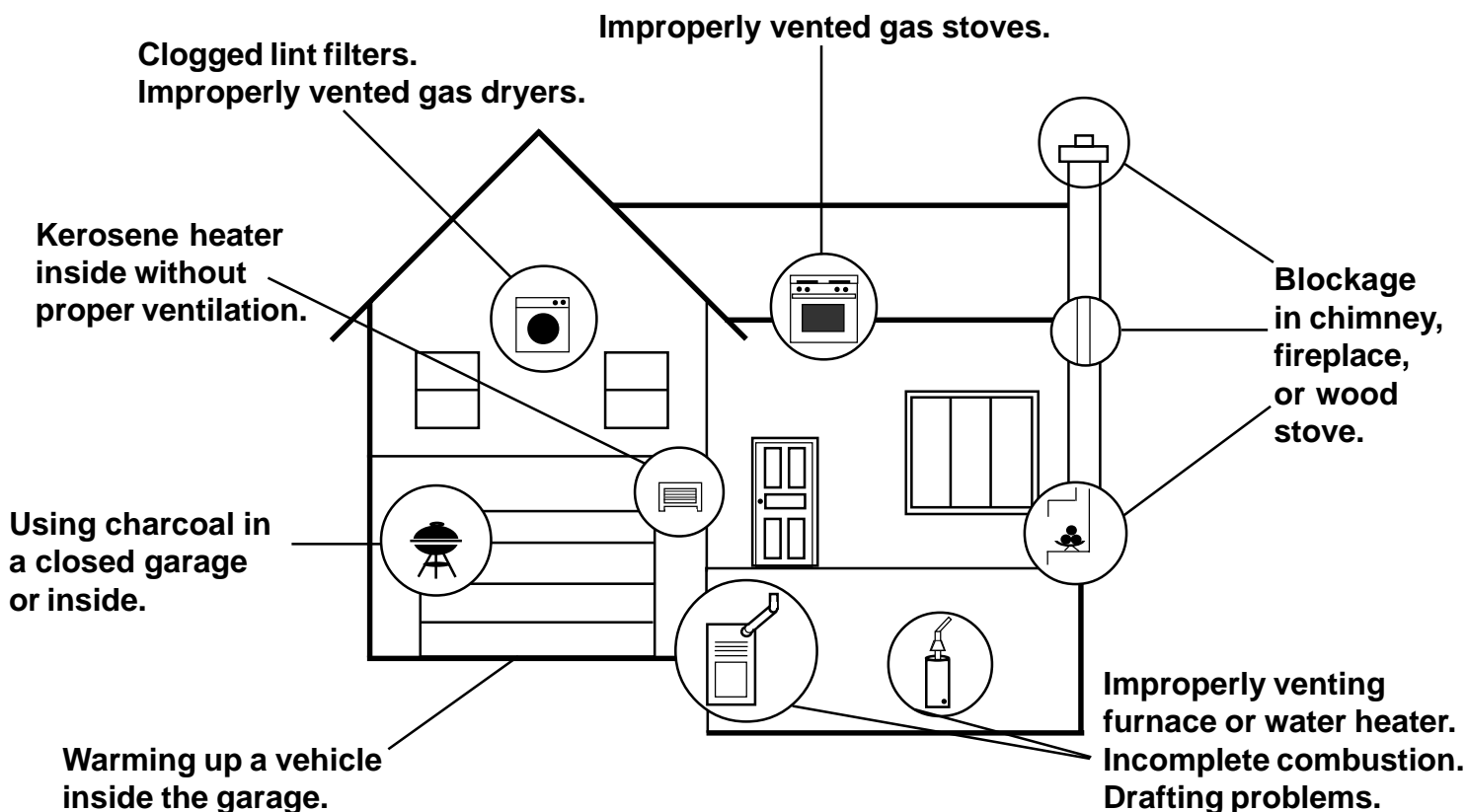
- It is a colorless, odorless, tasteless gas.
- It is a by-product of incomplete combustion or burning.
- It accounts for half of all fatal poisonings in the U.S. each year.

Carbon monoxide builds up in homes with improperly functioning gas appliances, fireplaces and homes with inadequate ventilation. Your body absorbs carbon monoxide by breathing. Carbon monoxide poisoning deprives your body of oxygen. It clings to your red blood cells and displaces oxygen in your blood. Although we breathe small amounts daily, in high enough concentrations it can kill in minutes. It's impossible to avoid it entirely and most experts agree that concentrations below two percent in the blood cause no concern.

Clues to look for in your house:

- ✓ persistently stuffy or stale air that hangs around
- ✓ very high humidity that often shows up as moisture on windows
- ✓ no draft in your chimney
- ✓ smell of exhaust
- ✓ soot around the outside of fireplace, furnace, or chimney flues

Sources of Carbon Monoxide in Your Home



How can you prevent carbon monoxide from building up in your house?

- ✓ Check your chimney each fall for signs of blockage and clean it annually.
- ✓ Make sure the flues on your gas water heater and gas furnace are properly installed and vented.
- ✓ Notice the flames and pilot lights of your gas appliances. A clean burning flame will be blue and crisp; if the flame is orange have it checked by a professional.
- ✓ Warm your vehicles up *outside* the garage, not in it.
- ✓ Soot build-up inside appliance flues indicates incomplete burning. Have these appliances checked by a professional.
- ✓ Check an operating furnace's draft hood to make sure you don't have a back draft.
- ✓ Add a chimney cap to prevent wildlife from building nests in your flue.
- ✓ Check the gas clothes dryer vent outside the house for lint.
- ✓ Don't use a charcoal grill inside and don't use charcoal in your fireplace.
- ✓ Don't use unvented heaters indoors. This includes a gas oven with the door open to heat your home.

If you suspect you have a carbon monoxide problem and it is not an emergency, call your gas company or heating and cooling professional. If you're exhibiting symptoms or a detector alarms, leave the home and call 911 from a neighbor's home.



Signs of CO poisoning include: headaches, nausea, flu-like symptoms, dizziness, persistent sleepiness, confusion, disorientation, noted difference of symptoms once you leave your home.

What About Carbon Monoxide Detectors?

The most important thing is to keep your house in shape so you won't have a carbon monoxide problem. Following the steps to the left should help you eliminate most sources of carbon monoxide in your home.

A carbon monoxide detector will alert you to the presence of this odorless gas. If you decide to purchase a carbon monoxide detector, keep in mind the following. Many types of carbon monoxide detectors stock store shelves. Some models have LED readouts of the CO levels in your home. Many have a battery back-up feature in case you lose power. Electric models start from about \$30. Make sure the one you purchase is UL or other testing laboratory approved.

Follow the manufacturer's guidelines for location, installation, and maintenance of your carbon monoxide detector. Make sure one is located close enough to awaken you if the alarm alerts while you are asleep.

Do some research and decide what is best for *your* home, *your* situation, and *your* family.

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