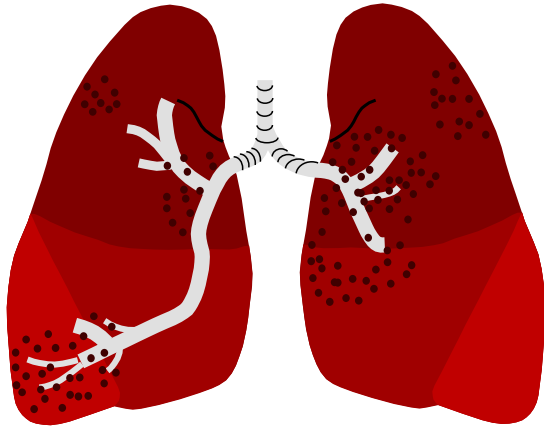


CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING



You can't see it!

You can't taste it!

You can't even smell it!

**But carbon monoxide can kill
without warning in just a
matter of hours!**

**You are particularly vulnerable
when you are asleep!**

**Each Year 60 DEATHS and a
Large Number OF Non-Fatal
Incidents are Caused by
Carbon Monoxide Poisoning**

What is Carbon Monoxide (CO)?

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a colourless, odourless, tasteless gas. Mild poisoning can cause such symptoms as nausea, dizziness or headaches while severe poisoning can result in brain or heart damage or even death. This poisonous gas is produced by the incomplete burning of any material containing carbon, such as petrol, natural gas, oil, propane, coal or wood.

Carbon monoxide poisoning is like a form of slow suffocation. When you inhale the gas, it attaches itself firmly to haemoglobin, the oxygen-carrying substance in your red blood cells. This impairs the oxygen-carrying capacity of your blood, starving your body's tissues and organs of oxygen. The symptoms are sometimes confused with the flu or food poisoning.

Most domestic carbon dioxide-poisoning incidents are caused by gas-fired room-heaters, fires and central heating boilers. Cookers and water heaters cause fewer but still a significant number of incidents.

Poorly maintained domestic solid fuelled appliances are four times as likely to cause a carbon dioxide incident than gas fired appliances - accounting for a third of all incidents (BRE 1999).

When a fatal accident occurs it is most likely to occur in the room containing the faulty equipment, or a room immediately above.

RIDDOR reports indicate:

40% of fatalities occur in the living room,
20% in the kitchen, and
20% in the bedroom

Symptoms of Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

The early symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning include:

- **tiredness**
- **nausea**
- **drowsiness**
- **headache**
- **pains in the chest**
- **stomach pains**

You are at risk of carbon monoxide poisoning if:

- your appliance was poorly installed
- your appliance is not working properly
- your appliance has not been checked or regularly maintained
- there is not enough fresh air in the room
- your chimney or flue gets blocked up
- you allow unqualified people to install or maintain your appliance
- you sleep in a room where an appliance, which is not of the 'room- sealed type' is left burning at night (these are commonly located on an external wall at a low level protected by a cage rather than at/above roof level).

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NEVER use an appliance if you think it is not working properly. With gas appliances look out for yellow or orange flames, soot or stains around the appliance and pilot lights which frequently blow out!

NEVER cover an appliance or block the convection air points!

NEVER block or obstruct any fixed ventilation grilles or air bricks!

NEVER block or cover outside flues!

CAUTION whenever draught exclusion, double glazing or a conservatory extension is fitted to a room containing a solid fuel or gas appliance, the appliance should subsequently be checked for safe operation!

ALL appliances should be checked for safety **AT LEAST every 12 MONTHS** by a CORGI registered installer!

BY LAW all business which carry out work on gas appliances must be registered with CORGI (the Council for Registered Gas Installers). Always check to see you installer is registered by asking to see a current CORGI registration certificate or Tel CORGI on 01256 372300

BY LAW only a competent person - someone with the right knowledge and technical experience - can carry out work on gas appliances!

BY LAW you must not use any gas appliance you know OR suspect is not safe.

DIY work on gas appliances could be **DANGEROUS** and **ILLEGAL**”!

BY LAW landlords are responsible in certain circumstances for making sure that appliances are

maintained in good order and checked for safety at least every 12 months.

LANDLORDS must also keep a record of the safety checks and issue it to the tenant.

If you live in, or are about to move into, rented accommodation, your landlord **MUST** provide you with written proof of safety checks (If you own the appliance, **YOU** are responsible for its maintenance and safety checks)

BY LAW, with the exception of the room-sealed type, there are restrictions on the installation of gas appliances in sleeping accommodation. These restrictions apply only to appliances fitted after 1/1/1996.

Carbon Monoxide Detectors

Carbon monoxide detectors are self contained devices that incorporate a means of measuring levels of carbon monoxide over time. They are designed to sound an alarm before an average healthy adult would experience symptoms. The alarm senses a certain saturation level of carbon monoxide, it will sound an alarm tone. It is very possible that you may not be experiencing symptoms when you hear the alarm - this does not mean there is no carbon monoxide present! **DO NOT** ignore your alarm if it goes off. Take appropriate action to stay safe.

Carbon monoxide detectors can be used as a backup but not as a replacement for proper use and maintenance of your fuel-burning appliances. CO detector technology is still being developed and the detectors are not generally considered to be as reliable as the smoke detectors found in homes today.

Carbon monoxide detectors **MUST** be correctly cited, the Building Research Establishment (BRE) recommends that carbon monoxide detectors are:

- ✓ located in rooms containing appliances, with the focus on flueless or open-flued
- ✓ the detector should be fixed at ceiling level and at least 300mm away from any wall. Where the ceiling slopes, the detector should be on the higher part
- ✓ the detector needs to be within 1-3m horizontal distance of the appliance
- ✓ if a detector must be fixed to a wall, it should be as high as possible, but not closer than 150mm of the ceiling, and should be higher than windows or doors.

Detectors **MUST** not be located:

- X in a draught or directly above a source of moisture heat
- X anywhere the temperature may rise above 40⁰C or drop below -10⁰C
- X in a cupboard or other enclosed space
- X obstructed in any way, for example by curtains, furniture, dirt etc.
- X where they will be turned off accidentally, or easily knocked or damaged.

USEFUL CONTACTS

BRE: Tel: 01923 664258. Fax: 01923 664787

HSE InfoLine: Tel: 0541 545500

CORGI: Tel: 01256 372300

Sources of information:

Health & Safety Executive &
Building Research Establishment



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