Carbon Monoxide Poisoning and Vehicle Safety

Carbon monoxide (CO) in vehicle exhaust is one of the most common causes of carbon monoxide poisoning. **CO is a poisonous gas you cannot see, taste or smell, but it can be deadly when you breathe it in**. CO is formed when carbon-based fuels, like gasoline and diesel, are burned. Any time a fuel-burning vehicle like a car, truck, tractor, forklift or RV is running, CO is present in the exhaust. CO can build up in enclosed or partially enclosed areas, leading to CO poisoning.

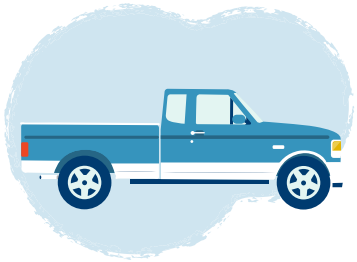
CO builds up in enclosed and partially enclosed spaces.

CO can build up in enclosed and partially enclosed spaces where ventilation is poor, including:

- **Vehicle interiors.**
- **Houses and buildings.**
- **Garages.**
- **Barns.**
- **Campers.**
- **Carports.**
- **Sheds.**

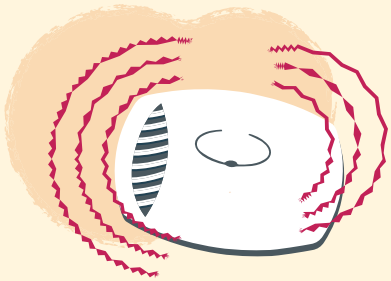
Be Aware.

Pay attention to vehicle exhaust.



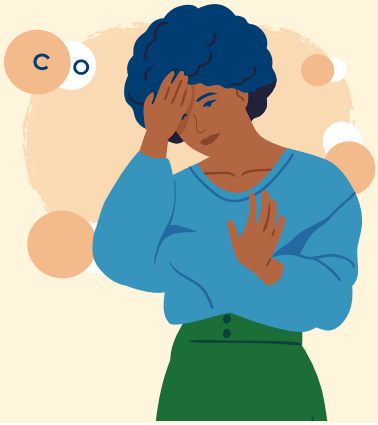
- Never run, work on or repair fuel-burning vehicles in enclosed or partially enclosed spaces, even if the door is open.
- Have fuel-burning vehicles inspected at least once a year.
- Repair exhaust leaks right away. CO can build up inside the vehicle from leaks.
- Never sit in a parked vehicle with the engine running for a long period of time, especially if the vehicle is in snow.
- When your car is running and your liftgate is open, CO is being pulled in. It's best to turn the vehicle off.
- While a fuel-burning vehicle is running, stay out of campers and RVs that sit on top of or are pulled by the vehicle. Exhaust containing CO can be drawn inside.

Stay Prepared



Install CO detectors.

- Install 10-year lithium battery CO detectors on all levels of your home and near all sleeping areas. Make sure to have CO detectors in workspaces like barns and workshops. **A CO detector is the only way to alert you of CO.**
- Test CO detectors at least monthly.
- If you do not have lithium CO detectors, replace alkaline batteries twice a year. An easy way to remember is during time changes (spring and fall).
- Replace your CO detector according to the manufacturer's instructions.



Know CO poisoning symptoms.

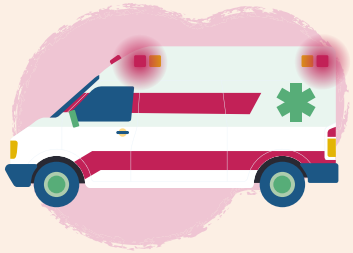
CO poisoning has flu-like symptoms, including:

- Headache.
- Dizziness.
- Nausea.
- Vomiting.
- Fatigue.
- Weakness.
- Chest tightness.
- Confusion.
- Unconsciousness.
- Coma.

Remember: People who are sleeping or intoxicated might not notice CO poisoning symptoms before it's too late.

Symptoms should not be ignored.
You could DIE within minutes if you do nothing.

Get to Fresh Air



If you suspect CO poisoning, have symptoms or if your CO detector goes off:

1. Leave the enclosed or partially enclosed space and move to fresh air right away.
2. Call 911.
3. Stay away from the enclosed or partially enclosed space until the fire department tells you it is safe to return, even if you aren't experiencing symptoms.

CO poisoning is preventable.

Be Aware | Stay Prepared | Get to Fresh Air

Learn more about CO poisoning.

Go to Michigan.gov/CarbonMonoxide
or scan the QR code.

MDHHS
Michigan Department of Health & Human Services

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