

Symptoms of Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

The deadly gas also known as the 'Silent Killer' is a product of the incomplete combustion of carbon-containing fossil fuels. It cannot be seen and has no taste or smell. Unexplained symptoms include –

- Drowsiness
- Lethargy
- Dizziness
- Headaches
- Chest pains
- Giddiness
- Nausea
- Diarrhoea
- Stomach pains



One or more of these symptoms can easily be mistaken for 'flu' and other common viruses, or even food poisoning. If one or more individuals in your household suffers from these symptoms while at home but feels fine elsewhere, they may be suffering from CO poisoning. The symptoms may also vary from one individual to the next.

If you have any concerns about potential sources of carbon monoxide in your home contact the Environmental Health Department at Dungannon Council, via telephone 028 87720366/7 or visit the Council website www.dungannon.gov.uk.

Remember Carbon Monoxide is a risk associated with any fuel-burning appliance and the fitting of a CO alarm should not be treated as an alternative to good maintenance and ventilation. A correctly positioned CO alarm will still require checking just like a smoke alarm and that only after carrying out all the safety checks and good maintenance, can you be sure you are protected.



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Carbon Monoxide (CO) Poisoning

'The Silent Killer'



Warning Signs

- Coal or wood burning fires that burn slowly or go out
- Sooty stains on or just above appliances or on the walls around fireplaces.
- A gas flame that normally burns blue, burning orange or yellow instead.

WHAT is carbon monoxide?

Carbon monoxide, or CO is a colourless, odourless, neutral, gas oxide, which is highly poisonous.

WHY is it poisonous?

When CO enters the body it prevents the blood from bringing oxygen to cells, tissues, and organs. In high doses this can cause immediate death, and in lower, prolonged doses, it can cause severe health problems.

Who is most at risk?

Those most at risk include – young children, the elderly and also people with anaemia, and those with heart and lung diseases. Pregnant women risk foetal damage through exposure to Carbon Monoxide.

Source: www.co-awareness.org

Regular maintenance is key in preventing CO Poisoning

Sources of CO can be any home heating appliance that burns

- gas
- coal
- wood
- oil



All heating appliances that burn fuel should be serviced annually to ensure the fuel is burning correctly and fumes are properly vented out of the house.

Ensure appliances such as wood burning stoves are fitted by a competent person and that any relevant safety certification is obtained. Chimneys must also be maintained and should be swept annually.

Also don't forget to regularly service any fuel-burning appliances present in your caravan or holiday type accommodation.

The following organisations may be of help :

- Northern Ireland Association of Chimney Sweeps, www.niacs.co.uk
- Gas Safe Register, www.gassaferegister.co.uk
- Scottish and Northern Ireland Plumbing Employers' Federation, www.snipef.org



Carbon Monoxide Alarms

CO alarms complying with **European Standard EN50291** can be a good early warning device, however they should not be a replacement for regular maintenance of appliances.

Positioning is critical to note that the reliability of any alarm detecting carbon monoxide in time is dependent on its position.

Carbon monoxide is heavier than air so an alarm must be positioned on a wall at head height. If you fit one on a bedroom wall, then it should be at the same height as your pillow. Carefully read and follow the manufacturer's instructions before fitting an alarm.

Without an audible CO alarm it is unlikely that people would know that they are being poisoned by this deadly gas. Carbon monoxide is colourless and has no taste or smell so there are few warning signs when it's around.

As we spend approximately 80% of our time in enclosed spaces like the home, vehicle, caravan, office or workshop there is the potential to be exposed to unsafe levels of CO, an alarm could dramatically decrease the risk of exposure .

