

CARBON MONOXIDE (CO)

Carbon monoxide (CO) is an odourless, colourless and tasteless toxic gas. Its effects can occur well before you are even aware of its presence.

Carbon monoxide is dangerous to your health even at a low level of exposure.

When it enters your body, CO bonds with hemoglobin. This reduces the amount of oxygen in the bloodstream, inhibiting the blood's ability to carry oxygen to the body.

Symptoms

What are the signs of carbon monoxide poisoning?

Mild poisoning can cause

- headaches,
- dizziness,
- nausea,
- vomiting,
- and fatigue.

More serious exposure can cause

- fainting,
- convulsions,
- coma
- and even death.

Protection and prevention

Did you know?

- Two-thirds of all households have at least one source of carbon monoxide in their environment.
- Less than one-third of these households are equipped with a carbon monoxide detector.

1. Identify the sources of carbon monoxide

[Identify the sources of carbon monoxide.](#) (Source: Quebec.ca)

2. Protect yourself by taking precautions

- Your home
- Your car
- Have your combustion appliances and ventilation in the places where they are used checked.
- The only way to detect the presence of carbon monoxide is to [install a carbon monoxide detector](#).
- Have the condition of your chimney and your furnace ductwork checked.

Help and Resources

Whom should you contact to get help?

If you suspect a case of carbon monoxide poisoning, act quickly!

- Get everyone out of the potentially contaminated area as soon as someone shows signs of poisoning.
- Call 911 or contact the Québec Poison Control Centre.
- Do not re-enter the location before getting expert advice. In Montréal, the fire department can measure carbon monoxide in the air and try to determine where it is coming from.

Where can you find additional, credible information?

- [Carbon monoxide. A silent killer.](#) (PDF)

Other useful links

- [Alliance des communautés culturelles pour l'égalité d'accès dans la santé et les services sociaux \(ACCÈSSS\) – document on carbon monoxide in several languages](#)
- [Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation \(CMHC\)](#)
- [CAA-Québec](#)
- [Energir - \(The New Gaz Métropolitain\)](#)

People at Risk

Carbon monoxide poisoning occurs faster in some people, including

- pregnant women and their foetuses;
- newborns and children (because their breathing is shallower and faster);
- elderly people (because their breathing is shallower and faster);
- people suffering from pulmonary, respiratory or cardiovascular problems;
- people with anaemia;
- smokers;
- people who engage in intense physical activity in carbon monoxide-contaminated and poorly ventilated environments; and
- people living at high altitudes.

Source: [Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux](#)