



Prevention is Best Treatment For Carbon Monoxide Poisonings

Just in the last two weeks: Maryland: two deaths, Florida: five deaths, Texas: one death, New York: 45 in the emergency room, Connecticut: 40 children in the emergency room, Colorado: one death and three unconscious, Arizona: nine hospitalized, Massachusetts: one death and 18 hospitalized--all from carbon monoxide poisoning.

Each year, carbon monoxide poisoning kills nearly 500 people nationwide and sends over 15,000 to the emergency room. The Centers for Disease Control ranked **Nebraska** as the state with the highest reliable mortality rate from carbon monoxide. In 2010, the Nebraska Regional Poison Center received 292 calls concerning carbon monoxide. But this figure can be misleading because carbon monoxide poisoning is often under-reported. It is imperative that the citizens of Nebraska understand the dangers, the symptoms and how to prevent poisoning from carbon monoxide.

Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning include sleepiness, headache, dizziness, blurred vision, nausea, shortness of breath and convulsions. The first step in treating carbon monoxide poisoning is getting the victim to fresh air. Then seek medical attention immediately.

Carbon monoxide is a gas produced when fuels burn incompletely. It has no color, taste or smell. The major causes of carbon monoxide poisoning include:

- Using heating equipment that is in poor repair
- Lack of ventilation in a car
- Using a charcoal grill indoors
- Using unvented space heaters

When fresh air is available and fuel is burning properly, there is little danger of carbon monoxide poisoning. However, operating an internal combustion engine or a poorly adjusted fuel-burning appliance in a closed area without proper ventilation can become fatal.

The Nebraska Regional Poison Center offers the following suggestions to help prevent carbon monoxide poisoning:

- Inspect all fuel-burning equipment yearly.
- Vent fuel-burning heaters to the outside.
- Do not use a gas range or an oven for heating a room.
- Never use a charcoal grill or hibachi inside.
- Install carbon monoxide detectors on every level of your home.
- Never leave a car running in an attached garage, even with the garage door open.
- Have the vehicle muffler and tailpipes checked regularly.

The Nebraska Regional Poison Center offers tips on carbon monoxide poisoning prevention as a free community service. If you suspect carbon monoxide poisoning or if you have any questions, contact the Nebraska Regional Poison Center toll-free at 1-800-222-1222 (in Nebraska and Wyoming).