

Beware carbon monoxide dangers when cold weather strikes

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(HealthDay)—As temperatures plummet across the northern half of the

United States this weekend, gas heating use goes up. So does the risk for accidental carbon monoxide poisoning.

That's because [carbon monoxide](#) exposure is both highly toxic and very hard to detect. The gas is colorless, tasteless and odorless.

As a result, more than 20,000 Americans seek emergency care each year for [carbon monoxide poisoning](#), according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. More than 400 die.

To prevent [carbon](#) monoxide incidents, the experts from the Nebraska Regional Poison Center say you should:

- Install carbon monoxide alarms on every floor of your home. This is the most important thing you can do.
- Inspect all fuel-burning equipment every year. Make sure that all gas heaters are properly vented to the outside. Gas generators should be placed at a good distance from the home, not near a window, door or vent.
- Don't use a gas range or oven to warm up your home.
- Don't use a gas or charcoal grill indoors.
- Never leave your vehicle running while parked in a garage attached to your home.
- Have your vehicle's muffler and tailpipes checked on a regular basis.

Though carbon monoxide is a quiet killer, signs of actual poisoning are very noticeable, according to the Poison Center. They include sleepiness, headache, dizziness, blurred vision, vomiting, shortness of breath and convulsions.

Anyone experiencing such symptoms should be immediately pulled out into the open air. It's important to seek medical help right away: Call 911

or the Poison Control Center at 1-800-222-1222.

More information: The National Safety Council has more on [carbon monoxide poisoning](#).

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