



CHILDREN'S  
HEALTH SYSTEM®

## JANUARY

### Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

Carbon Monoxide (CO) is an invisible and odorless gas, and is produced when burning any fuel, such as gasoline, propane, natural gas, oil, wood or charcoal. It can be a silent killer, which causes illness, and possibly death, by decreasing the amount of oxygen present in the body.

Last year, a family of six in Baldwin County were treated and released for accidental carbon monoxide poisoning, and two women in the Silver Hill area were killed in their home from exposure to this lethal gas.

Young children are especially vulnerable to the effects of carbon monoxide because of their smaller bodies. Children process carbon monoxide differently than adults, according to experts at Children's Hospital, and may be more severely affected by it, and may show symptoms sooner. And while Carbon Monoxide poisoning is more common during the winter, it is not only limited to cold weather months, but can happen any time of the year.

"Carbon Monoxide, the leading cause of poisoning deaths, is not just a winter time hazard; it is a year round hazard," said Ann Slattery, Supervisor of the Regional Poison Control Center at Children's Hospital. "No matter the season of the year, when I hear complaints of headache, nausea and vomiting, I think carbon monoxide."

**You won't know that you have a carbon monoxide leak, Slattery says, without a working detector.** If you burn any fuels for heat or cooking, be sure that you have a working carbon monoxide detector and deter this silent killer.

Experts from Children's hospital offer these simple safety tips to help protect your family:

- Know the symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning, which include headache, fatigue, nausea, vomiting and confusion. In severe cases, the person may lose consciousness or die. CO poisoning can often be mistaken for other illnesses, such as the flu and usually more than one person in the household will suffer symptoms at the same time.
- Install a CO alarm outside every sleeping area and on every level of your home.
- Place CO alarms at least 15 feet away from every fuel-burning appliance to reduce the number of nuisance alarms.
- Test alarms every month and replace them every five years.

- Make sure alarms can be heard when you test them and practice an escape plan with your entire family.
- Have all gas, oil or coal burning appliances inspected by a technician every year to ensure they are working correctly and are properly ventilated.
- Never use a stove for heating.
- Do not use a grill, generator or camping stove inside your home, garage or near a window. Never leave a car, SUV, or motorcycle engine running inside a garage, even if the garage door is open.

If your CO alarm goes off, follow these steps:

- Get everyone out of the house as quickly as possible into fresh air. Then call for help from a neighbor's home or a cell phone outside of your home.
- If someone is experiencing CO poisoning symptoms, call 911 for medical attention.
- If no one is experiencing symptoms, call the fire department. They will let you know when it is safe to re-enter your home.

For more information on this and other children's health and safety issues, visit our web site at [www.chsys.org](http://www.chsys.org).