

Gas safety - Carbon Monoxide 'The Silent Killer'

Every year about 30 people die from carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning caused by gas appliances and flues that have not been properly installed or maintained, whilst many others also suffer ill health.

When gas does not burn properly, as with other fuels such as coal, wood or oil, excess CO is produced which is poisonous.

You can't see it, taste it or smell it but CO can kill without warning in just a matter of hours.

You are particularly at risk when you are asleep because you cannot recognise the early symptoms of CO poisoning. These include tiredness, drowsiness, headaches, giddiness, nausea, vomiting, pains in the chest, breathlessness, stomach pains, erratic behavior and visual problems. These symptoms can mimic many common ailments and may easily be confused as flu, or simple tiredness.

If you or your family experience the above symptoms and you believe CO may be involved **you must seek urgent medical advice**. Your doctor will need to test you for a blood or breath sample. Be aware, CO quickly leaves the blood and tests may be inaccurate if taken more than four hours after exposure has ceased.

You are at risk from CO poisoning if

- Your appliance was poorly installed
- Your appliance is not working properly
- Your appliance has not been checked for safety or maintained regularly
- There is not enough fresh air in the room
- Your chimney or flue gets blocked up
- You allow non-CORGI registered engineers to install or maintain your appliance(s)

Signs to look out for include

- Yellow or brown staining around, or on appliances
- Pilot lights that frequently blow out
- Increased condensation inside windows
- Yellow rather than blue flame (apart from flueless fires)

If you think your appliance is spilling CO

- Switch off the appliance and do not reuse until remedial action has been taken
- Open all doors and windows to ventilate the room - **do not sleep in it**
- Visit your GP urgently and tell them that you believe your symptoms may be related to CO poisoning and request either a blood and/or breath sample

- Contact a [CORGI](#) registered installer to make repairs

Further advice and information

- Campaign for Bedsit Rights 02075052135
- Carbon Monoxide Support Group (South West) 01278786488
- [CO-Awareness](#)
email: LynnCoAwareness@aol.com
- [CO-Gas Safety](#) 01372 466112
email: office@co-gassafety.co.uk
- HSE Gas Safety Advice Line 0800 300 363 (Freephone service)
- Transco Gas Emergency (24 hours) 0800 111 999 (Freephone Service)