# Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

## Public Health Information Sheet

## Carbon monoxide (CO) is a colourless, odourless gas. If breathed in (inhaled) it can cause illness and in severe cases, death.

### Where is CO found?

Carbon monoxide comes from a range of sources. This can include emissions from:

* incompletely burned carbon-based material, e.g. wood, paper, fuel
* internal combustion engines (cars, trucks, forklifts, etc)
* kilns and boilers
* welding and plastics moulding
* space heaters, oil or gas heaters
* waterpipe smoking (alternatively known as hookah, narghile and shisha)

CO from these sources can build up in enclosed or semi-enclosed spaces, for example if windows are kept shut.

### What are the symptoms of acute CO poisoning?

Common symptoms include:

* headache
* dizziness
* weakness
* confusion
* nausea.

High levels of CO poisoning can cause:

* chest pains
* hallucinations
* convulsions
* loss of consciousness
* death.

If you or someone you know has these symptoms and may have been exposed to carbon monoxide, seek medical treatment immediately by calling 111.

### Who is at greatest risk from CO poisoning?

### For more information or advice

For general advice please contact your doctor, or call Healthline on 0800 611 116. In an emergency call 111.

You can also contact the National Public Health Service – Northern Region on 09 623 4600.

For information on CO at work visit:

* www.worksafe.govt.nz/topic-and-industry/fumes/carbon-monoxide-invisible-and-deadly/

CO poisoning can be dangerous for everyone. However certain groups are more at risk if exposed to CO.

This includes:

* infants
* unborn babies
* people with chronic heart disease, anaemia, or respiratory problems.

### How to prevent CO poisoning

* Move CO generating processes outside to allow good ventilation while operating.
* Have your heating systems (including hot water) and any other gas, oil, or coal burning appliances serviced by a qualified technician every year.
* Do not use unflued gas heaters, cookers or portable flameless chemical heaters (catalytic) indoors. These appliances burn gas and can cause CO to build up inside your home.
* Never run a car or truck in the garage with the garage door shut.