

Living Safely

with disabilities and special health needs

Understanding Carbon Monoxide



Children's
Specialized Hospital®

An RWJBarnabas Health facility



Carbon monoxide is an invisible, odorless, colorless gas created when fuels (such as gasoline, wood, coal, natural gas, propane, oil, and methane) burn incompletely.

Breathing too much carbon monoxide can kill me.



In a home or apartment, heating and cooking equipment that burn fuel can be sources of carbon monoxide.

It is important for me to have a carbon monoxide alarm in my home or apartment. Some newer model smoke alarms are a 2-in-1 fire and carbon monoxide (CO) alarm.

I should choose a CO alarm that has a qualified testing laboratory label on the package or alarm.



I should install CO alarms in a central location outside each sleeping area and on every level of the home as well as in other locations where required by laws, codes or standards.

When installing a CO alarm, I should always follow the manufacturer's instructions for where to put it and how high to place it on the wall.



In order to make sure I am safe, it is helpful to connect all the CO alarms together in my home or apartment so that if one alarm goes off, they will all sound.



It is important to test my CO alarms once a month.

To test my CO alarm, I press the test button on the alarm.

I need to replace CO alarms according to the manufacturer's instructions.



If the trouble signal sounds, I check for low batteries.

If the battery is low, I need to replace it.

If it still sounds, I need to call the fire department.



If the CO alarm sounds, I need to move to outside to get fresh air. Immediately.

I need to make sure everyone who was inside my house or apartment gets outside too.

I should call for help from a fresh air location and stay there until emergency responders tell me that it is safe to come back inside.



Gas or charcoal grills can produce CO so I should only use them outside.



If I need to warm a vehicle, drive out of the garage as soon as I start the vehicle.

I should never run a vehicle or other fueled engine or motor indoors, even if garage doors are open.

I need to make sure the exhaust pipe of a running vehicle is not covered with snow.



During and after a snowstorm, I need to make sure vents for the clothes dryer, furnace, stove, and fireplace are clear of snow build-up.



If I am using a generator, I must make sure it is in a well-ventilated location outdoors away from windows, doors, and vent openings.

For more Living Safely resources, visit www.rwjbh.org/cshlivingsafely

We value the expertise of our partners in safety who have demonstrated their commitment to inclusive healthy communities. Portions of this resource have been adapted from Safe Kids Worldwide (www.safekids.org).

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