

- [What is carbon monoxide poisoning?](#)
- [Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning](#)
- [What is carbon monoxide? What is carbon monoxide?](#)
- [How do I know if my gas appliances are leaking carbon monoxide?](#)
- [Can I get a carbon monoxide alarm?](#)

What is carbon monoxide poisoning?

Carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning occurs when you breathe in even small amounts of the gas. You can't see, smell or taste carbon monoxide so you won't know it is there. You won't necessarily notice the smell of gas.

If you breathe in CO, it gets into your blood stream and prevents your red blood cells from carrying oxygen. Without oxygen the body tissue and cells die.

Levels that do not kill can cause serious harm to health if breathed in over a long period. Paralysis and brain damage can be caused as a result of exposure to CO.

Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning

Being aware of the symptoms of CO poisoning could save your life.

Many of the symptoms of carbon monoxide are similar to those of flu, food poisoning, viral infections, or simple tiredness. It is common to mistake the symptoms for something else.

Remember the six main symptoms to look out for:

headaches

dizziness

nausea

breathlessness

collapse

loss of consciousness

Other signs that you may have CO poisoning:

If your symptoms only occur when you are at home

Your symptoms disappear or get better when you leave home and come back when you return

If anyone else in your household is experiencing any of the symptoms (including your pets) and whether they appear at a similar time

If you have any of the above symptoms:

Get fresh air immediately. Open doors and windows, turn off

gas appliances and leave the house

See your doctor immediately or go to hospital – let them know that you suspect carbon monoxide poisoning. They can do a blood or breath test to check.

If you think there is immediate danger, Gas Emergency Helpline
Get a Gas Safe registered engineer to inspect your gas appliances and flues to see if there is a dangerous problem

What is carbon monoxide?

What is carbon monoxide?

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a highly poisonous substance which is produced by the incomplete burning of gas and Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG).

This can happen if a gas appliance has been incorrectly fitted, badly repaired or poorly maintained or if flues, chimneys or vents are blocked.

You could be inhaling CO without realising it. You can't see, smell or taste it, but at high levels it can kill you in minutes. Even breathing in a small amount can cause loss of consciousness and death.

Properly managed, gas is safe. Poorly managed, gas can produce harmful levels of carbon monoxide. So always use gas safe register engineers. Gas Safe registered engineer.

Oil and solid fuels such as coal, coke, wood, petrol and oil can also produce carbon monoxide.

How do I know if my gas appliances are leaking carbon monoxide?

Your home may show symptoms of carbon monoxide, too. Any one of the following could be a sign that there is a build up of carbon monoxide and you need to have your appliances checked
The flame on your cooker should be crisp and blue. Lazy yellow or orange flames mean you need to get your cooker checked
Soot or yellow/brown staining around or on appliances

Pilot lights that frequently blow out

Increased condensation inside windows

If you suspect that you have a faulty gas appliance in your home get it checked as soon as possible by a Gas Safe registered engineer.

Can I get a carbon monoxide alarm?

Gas Safe Register strongly recommends that you fit a carbon monoxide alarm in your home.

This will alert you if there is carbon monoxide in your home, but this is no substitute for getting your appliances checked

A CO alarm looks similar to a smoke alarm and is very easy to fit by following manufacturer's instructions. You can purchase a carbon monoxide alarm for under £20 at your local DIY store, supermarket or from your energy supplier.

Before purchasing a CO alarm, always make sure it is officially approved to EN 50291. It must have a British or European approval mark on it, such as a Kitemark.

You can be particularly at risk from CO poisoning when you are asleep as you may not be aware of early CO symptoms until it is too late. Do not use the 'black spot' detectors that change colour when carbon monoxide is present. These will not make a sound to wake you up if the poisonous gas is present while you are sleeping.

To avoid CO poisoning, always have your gas appliances installed and serviced annually by a Gas Safe registered engineer. They have been trained and are qualified to carry out gas work to the highest safety standards.
