



Carbon Monoxide Poisoning



Overview

This is a life-threatening condition. It happens when you breathe in too much carbon monoxide. That's a gas that you can't see, smell or taste. As you breathe it in, it builds up in your bloodstream. It takes the place of oxygen, and is carried to all the cells of your body. These cells don't get the oxygen they need. Soon, they stop working and die.

Causes

Where does carbon monoxide come from? It's made when we burn things. Gasoline and propane release carbon monoxide when they're burned. So does wood, charcoal and other fuels. When a fuel burns and there's no fresh air to clear away the fumes, carbon monoxide builds up. This is why you should never use things like outdoor grills and gas-powered generators in your house.

Symptoms

What are the symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning? You may have a dull headache. You may have nausea or vomiting. You can have shortness of breath. You may feel weak, dizzy and confused. Your vision may be blurry, and you may pass out.

Treatment

How do we treat it? If you think you may have symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning, or if you find others who are showing these signs, get fresh air immediately. And get medical help as soon as you can. You may need to breathe pure oxygen at a hospital. You may need to spend time in a pressurized chamber that helps get the carbon monoxide out of your cells. Your doctor will create a plan that's right for you.