Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

You have been exposed to carbon monoxide (CO). CO is an odorless, toxic gas found in all kinds of smoke and exhaust fumes. When carbon monoxide is inhaled it combines with your red blood cells (*hemoglobin*). The CO takes up space on your red blood cells. This interferes with oxygen delivery to the entire body.

SYMPTOMS

- Headache.
- Blurred vision.
- Dizziness.
- Nausea and vomiting.
- Weakness.
- Confusion and drowsiness.

Severe cases may require hospital care.

TREATMENT

The treatment is using high concentrations of oxygen until your symptoms are better. After going home you should rest for 1 to 2 days. **Do not** smoke, use alcohol, or sedative drugs. A few people exposed to carbon monoxide will have problems with memory and thinking for several days. **Check with your caregiver if you are not fully recovered within 1 week.**

PREVENTION

Correct the problem that caused your poisoning in the first place. Avoid using stoves or barbecues in closed spaces such as tents, trailers, or poorly ventilated rooms. Gas heaters that can produce carbon monoxide should also be checked to make sure they are working properly. Carbon monoxide detectors are available. They should be installed if this type of heater or stove is in use.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You develop an unexplained headache.
- You develop chest pain.
- You develop problems breathing.
- You become confused, have trouble thinking, or trouble making decisions.
- You develop nausea and/or vomiting.

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