



Civil Air Patrol – USAF Auxiliary

La Crosse Composite Squadron  
**HEALTH & SAFETY NEWS**

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## CARBON MONOXIDE: THE INVISIBLE KILLER

### WHERE DOES CARBON MONOXIDE COME FROM?

Carbon monoxide is an odorless, colorless gas that often goes undetected, striking victims caught off guard or in their sleep. This "silent killer" is produced by burning fuel in cars or trucks, small engines, stoves, lanterns, grills, fireplaces, gas ranges, portable generators or furnaces. When the gas builds up in enclosed spaces, people or animals who breathe it can be poisoned. Ventilation does not guarantee safety.

### HOW CAN I PREVENT CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING?

Winter can be a prime time for carbon monoxide poisoning as people turn on their heating systems and mistakenly warm their cars in garages. The National Safety Council recommends you install a battery-operated carbon monoxide detector in your home near the bedrooms. Check or replace the battery when you change the time on your clocks each spring and fall. The CDC offers these additional tips:

- Have your heating system, water heater and any other gas or coal-burning appliances serviced by a qualified technician every year
- Do not use portable flameless chemical heaters indoors
- Never use a generator inside your home, basement or garage or less than 20 feet from any window, door or vent; fatal levels of carbon monoxide can be produced in just minutes
- Have your chimney checked and cleaned every year, and make sure your fireplace damper is open before lighting a fire and well after the fire is extinguished
- Make sure your gas appliances are vented properly
- Never use a gas oven for heating your home
- Never let a car idle in the garage

### STEPS TO TAKE WHEN CARBON MONOXIDE ALARM SOUNDS

- Immediately move outside to fresh air and call emergency services, fire department or 911
- Do a head count to check that all persons are accounted for
- Do not reenter the premises until emergency responders have given you permission to do so

### SYMPTOMS OF CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING

Low to moderate carbon monoxide poisoning is characterized by headache, fatigue, shortness of breath, nausea, and dizziness. Mild symptoms sometimes are mistaken for flu. High levels of carbon monoxide poisoning result in mental confusion, loss of muscular coordination, loss of consciousness, and death. Symptom severity varies depending on the level of carbon monoxide and duration of exposure.

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*\* Source: National Safety Council*

## FEBRUARY IS HEART HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

Heart disease is the leading cause of death for both men and women in the United States. Making heart-healthy choices, knowing your family health history and the risk factors for heart disease, having regular check-ups and working with your physician to manage your health are all integral aspects of saving lives.

### HEART ATTACK SYMPTOMS

Symptoms of a heart attack or myocardial infarction can vary greatly from person to person, but in order to help you identify a possible heart attack, we have listed some of the most common symptoms below:

Approximately 2 out of every 3 people who have heart attacks experience chest pain, shortness of breath or fatigue a few days or weeks before the attack. During a heart attack, a person may feel pain in the middle of the chest which can spread to the back, neck, jaw or arms. The pain may also be felt only in the back, neck, jaw or arms rather than the chest. A person having a heart attack may have gas-like pain or pressure in the stomach area which is often mistaken for indigestion.

It is important to note that approximately 1 out of every 3 people who have heart attacks do not feel any chest pain. Many of these are women, non-Caucasian, older than 75, have heart failure or diabetes or have had a stroke.

Nausea and vomiting (which are sometimes mistaken for food poisoning or the stomach flu), lightheadedness or dizziness, shortness of breath (especially in older people), feelings of restlessness, sweatiness, anxiety or a sense of impending doom, bluishness of the lips, hands or feet, heavy pounding of the heart or abnormal heart rhythms, loss of consciousness, disorientation resembling a stroke may occur in older people are common symptoms.

Older people, especially women, will often take longer to admit they are not well and to request medical assistance.

### HELPING A VICTIM OF A HEART ATTACK

Half of the deaths from heart attack occur in the first 3 or 4 hours after the onset of symptoms, so it is important to know and recognize the warning signs.

If you think that you or someone in your presence is having a heart attack, call 911 IMMEDIATELY! Every minute you delay can result in more damage to the heart muscle. Having the victim chew an aspirin after the ambulance has been called may help reduce the size of the blood clot.

In Sudden Cardiac Death, begin cardiopulmonary resuscitation or CPR. CPR can double or triple a cardiac arrest victim's chances of survival.

Utilize an automated external defibrillator (AED) if one is available. Follow the instructions provided by the unit. Many public places such as airports and shopping malls now have AEDs. Brain death begins in only 4 to 6 minutes after cardiac arrest, but it is often reversible if treated within a few minutes with defibrillation, or an electric shock to the heart, as from an AED, to restore a normal heartbeat.

***NOTE: The chances of survival for a victim of Sudden Cardiac Death drop by 7 to 10 percent with every minute that passes without CPR and defibrillation, and very few attempts at resuscitation succeed after 10 minutes, so the key is to ACT QUICKLY!***

### LEARN CPR/AED

Taking an American Red Cross or American Heart Association CPR/AED class may save a life!

*\*Source: The Heart Foundation*