

Is it the flu or carbon monoxide poisoning?

By Erby Crofutt

B4U Close Home Inspections

104 Lawson Drive, Suite 103-400

Georgetown KY 40324-8898

www.b4uclose.com, erby@b4uclose.com

Phone: 502.570.4054 or 877.513.8235 (toll free), Fax: 502.867.4962.

Erby is a member of the Kentucky Real Estate Inspection Association (KREIA).

He conducts home inspections in Central, Northern, and Eastern Kentucky.



The flu and carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning share many symptoms: headache, dizziness, nausea, weakness, confusion and fatigue. However, while CO poisoning does not come with a fever, the flu does. If you have flu symptoms, but no fever, remind your physician about the possibility of CO poisoning.

The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) estimates that over 200 people a year die, while thousands more are treated for CO poisoning by hospital emergency rooms and private physicians. Other organizations place these estimates even higher.

How can you prevent becoming an annual statistic from CO poisoning?

- Have all gas burning appliances inspected and serviced annually by a professional technician.
- Have all chimneys and flues checked annually for loose connections, blockage, corrosion, etc. Also make sure you properly open the flue on any wood burning appliance or fireplace when using them. (To avoid fire danger, make sure you have the chimney flue inspected and cleaned, each year, by a chimney sweep certified by the Chimney Safety Institute of America (www.csia.org).
- Make sure your heating systems have an adequate intake of outside air.
- Never use appliances such as a clothes dryer, range, or oven to heat your home.
- Don't leave cars running in garages, even with the door open. If you must preheat your car, back it out of the garage and close the garage door.
- Never, never burn charcoal in a confined space.
- Finally, install CO detector/alarms in your home. These detector/alarms are similar in concept to the smoke alarms that are prevalent in today's homes. There are two types of CO detector/alarms available: hardwired, (using household current); and battery powered. Hardwired sensors usually purge themselves and resample for CO at a preset period of time. Battery powered sensors usually react to prolonged exposure to CO. Whichever kind you purchase, make sure the CO detector/alarm meets the requirements of Underwriter's Laboratory (UL) 2034. (This can usually be determined by reading the manufacturer's label or installation instructions.)

I recommend installation of ceiling mounted detector/alarms in the following areas:

- One on each floor of the residence (On floors used for sleeping, the detector/alarm should be placed in the hallway near each sleeping area);
- One in the vicinity of each major fuel burning appliance (not within five feet);
- And one in the garage.

Consult the manufacturer's installation instructions to ensure the right placement of the detector/alarm in each area.

Flu shots help protect against the flu. A CO detector/alarm helps protect against Carbon Monoxide poisoning. Save your health—get both.