



## A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

### *Beware of the Air*

*Nonfatal, Unintentional, Non-Fire-Related Carbon Monoxide Exposures — United States, 2004–2006*

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*[Announcer] This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC — safer, healthier people.*

[Dr. Gaynes] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the MMWR, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

Homeowners beware: a killer may be lurking. Carbon monoxide, or CO, is a colorless, odorless, nonirritating gas that's produced by heating systems, cars, other gas-powered engines, and even cigarettes. During a recent three-year period, over 60,000 people were treated in emergency departments for CO exposure. Dr. Fuyuen Yip is a researcher with CDC's National Center for Environmental Health. She's joining us today to discuss the dangers of carbon monoxide exposure. Welcome to the show, Fuyuen.

[Dr. Yip] Thank you for having me.

[Dr. Gaynes] Fuyuen, how many people in the United States die each year from unintentional carbon monoxide poisoning?

[Dr. Yip] It's estimated about 450 people die each year.

[Dr. Gaynes] And what are the most common sources of this carbon monoxide?

[Dr. Yip] Combustion sources, like boilers, furnaces, generators, and other gas, oil, or coal-burning appliances are typically common sources of carbon monoxide.

[Dr. Gaynes] Are cases of CO exposure more common during winter months?

[Dr. Yip] We do see more CO exposures during the winter months. About 2 out of every 5 exposures are occurring in the winters and it's likely because of the increased use of furnaces, space heaters, and seasonal appliances.

[Dr. Gaynes] Fuyuen, what are the most common symptoms of CO poisoning?

[Dr. Yip] CO poisoning symptoms are very nonspecific. They almost resemble viral-like symptoms like fatigue, dizziness, headaches, and nausea. But more severe symptoms of CO exposure can include coma, disorientation, long-term neurological disabilities, and even death.

[Dr. Gaynes] What should a person do if they or someone they know is exhibiting signs of CO exposure?

[Dr. Yip] Since CO exposure can be very serious, we recommend that the person seek medical attention immediately.

[Dr. Gaynes] Fuyuen, what steps can people take to prevent carbon monoxide exposure in their homes?

[Dr. Yip] There are six things that people can do. The first is to make sure that their home heating systems, water heaters, and any other gas, oil, or coal-burning appliances are properly serviced by a qualified technician every year. And the second is to install battery-operated CO detectors in their house and to check or replace their batteries when they're changing the time on their clock during daylight savings time. Third, don't use a generator, a charcoal grill, camp stove, or other similar gasoline or charcoal-burning device inside your house, inside the basement, or the garage. Fourth, don't run a vehicle inside a garage, such as to warm it up, even if the garage door is open. Fifth, don't burn anything in a stove or fireplace that's not properly vented. And sixth, never heat your house with a gas oven.

[Dr. Gaynes] Fuyuen, where can listeners get more information about CO exposure?

[Dr. Yip] Listeners can get more information at [www.cdc.gov/CO](http://www.cdc.gov/CO).

[Dr. Gaynes] Fuyuen, thanks for sharing this information with our listeners today.

[Dr. Yip] Thanks so much for having me.

[Dr. Gaynes] That's it for this week's show. Be sure and join us next week. Until then, be well. This is Dr. Robert Gaynes for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

*[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) or call 1-800-CDC-INFO, 24/7.*