Signs of Carbon Monoxide Poisoning: What to Know to Stay Safe.

Each year approximately 50,000 people in the U.S. visit the emergency room for carbon monoxide poisoning and more than 400 die, according to the National Center for Environmental Health. Because it's an invisible, odorless gas, it easily goes undetected. But if you learn the signs of carbon monoxide poisoning and follow these safety tips, you can protect yourself and your loved ones from this invisible threat.

8 safety tips to follow:

1. Install carbon monoxide detectors in your home. Like smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detectors will sound a loud alarm when they detect the gas in your home. Install one on every level of your home and near every sleeping area (for instance, in the hallway outside bedrooms). Choose battery-operated or battery-backup detectors and change the batteries twice a year when you change the batteries in your smoke detectors.

2. Know the signs of carbon monoxide poisoning. In case your alarm should fail to alert you, or if you are staying somewhere without carbon monoxide detectors, be aware of these signs of poisoning:

- Headache
- Fatigue

- Nausea
- Shortness of breath
- Dizziness

In severe cases, you may experience:

- Mental confusion
- Vomiting
- Loss of coordination
- Loss of consciousness

3. Never run your car's engine inside your garage. You may be aware that running your car's engine with the garage door closed can quickly lead to dangerous carbon monoxide buildup. But did you know it's also unsafe to run the engine with the garage door *open*? If you wish to warm up your car before driving on a chilly day, pull it out of the garage into the driveway first.

4. Have all gas, oil or coal-burning appliances serviced regularly. At least once a year, have a qualified technician check your furnace, water heater and any other appliances that burn gas, oil or coal. Have them double-check that all these appliances are properly vented.

5. Have your chimney checked and cleaned annually. Blockages in your chimney can result in carbon monoxide buildup in your home.

6. Never use a gas stove to heat your home. If for some reason your heating system is not adequately warming your home, DO NOT use a gas stove for this purpose. Doing this can lead to dangerous levels of carbon monoxide.

7. Never use a charcoal or gas camp stove indoors. Save these for outdoor cookouts and camping. Both give off carbon monoxide.

8. Never use a generator inside your home or garage. Generators should only be operated outside your home, at least 20 feet away from any doors, windows or vents.

Following these safety tips and knowing the signs of carbon monoxide poisoning can help to prevent catastrophe. If you ever suspect carbon monoxide poisoning, go outside immediately for fresh air.

Now that you've reviewed ways to stay safe in your home, equip your home with another form of protection – homeowners insurance. *Bonus tip:* Save money by talking to your agent about all the safety features installed in your home and learn about available discounts for smoke detectors and alarm systems.