

## How to Care for Your Child with Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

This leaflet will provide you with information about carbon monoxide poisoning symptoms, diagnosis, treatment and home care advice.



### What is carbon monoxide poisoning?

- Carbon monoxide poisoning happens when a child breathes in carbon monoxide (CO), a gas that you can't see, smell, or taste. It's called the "silent killer" because it can be very dangerous and lead to death.
- Most cases of poisoning happen from inhaling CO from sources like:
  - Smokes from a fire
  - Fumes from a car exhaust
  - Broken indoor heaters
  - Generators
  - Kerosene space heaters
- Cyanide poisoning can sometimes occur alongside carbon monoxide poisoning if the child inhaled smoke.
- In rare cases, it can also happen if the child swallows certain paint strippers or -- degreasers that contain methylene chloride.

## What are the symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning?

The symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning can range from mild to severe, depending on how much CO your child breathed in and for how long he/she was exposed to it.

### **Early symptoms can feel like the flu and may include:**

- Headache
- Nausea or vomiting
- Dizziness or loss of consciousness
- Cough
- Fatigue

### **Severe symptoms can lead to:**

- Coma
- Heart attack
- Seizures
- Brain damage
- In serious cases, carbon monoxide poisoning can lead to death.

### **Some might experience delayed effects days or weeks later, like:**

- Memory problems
- Trouble concentrating
- Changes in personality

## How is carbon monoxide poisoning diagnosed?

- Doctors can diagnose carbon monoxide poisoning if your child has been exposed to a fire and shows symptoms that match those of CO poisoning.
- The diagnosis of carbon monoxide poisoning can be confirmed by a blood test for carboxyhaemoglobin. In some cases, additional blood tests and a physical exam may also be needed.

## How is carbon monoxide poisoning treated?

- All carbon monoxide poisoning cases need to be assessed and treated in a healthcare center.
- The first step is to move the child away from the source of carbon monoxide into fresh air, and to provide oxygen.
- Other treatments may include medicine (e.g. antiemetics for nausea/vomiting, antiepileptics for seizures, etc.).
- Severe cases may need intensive care unit admission. Some children may need treatment in a hyperbaric oxygen chamber.

## What should I do if my child has carbon monoxide poisoning?

- Quickly move your child away from the source of CO exposure and into fresh air.
- Take your child to the emergency department as well as anyone who may have been exposed, or call 999 for an ambulance.
- After leaving the hospital, keep watching for any symptoms for a few weeks. Call the Qatar Poison Center at 4003-1111 if you see any new symptoms.

## Home safety tips to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning:

- Install carbon monoxide detectors in your home, if not installed already.
- Check the detectors regularly and replace the batteries as needed.
- Do not burn charcoal inside your home or in enclosed spaces like tents.
- Do not heat your home with a gas oven.
- Avoid sealing exhaust ducts for any appliances such as water heater or clothes dryer.
- Do not use kerosene space heaters or kerosene lamps inside closed spaces.
- Never leave the car running inside a closed garage.
- Be aware of the early symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning so you can recognize them immediately.

## When should I go to the Emergency Department?

If you suspect that your child has carbon monoxide poisoning from any source, call the Qatar Poison Center (QPC) at 4003-1111 immediately and go to the nearest emergency department, or call 999 for an ambulance.

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