Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

As people turn on their heating systems, a common problem is carbon monoxide poisoning, which may seem like flu symptoms.

Carbon monoxide (CO) is an odorless, colorless, tasteless, deadly gas. It is produced any time fuel, such as oil, gas, or wood, is burned.

Carbon monoxide poisoning can be caused by:

- faulty furnace operation;
- blocked furnace exhaust systems;
- charcoal or kerosene heaters;
- coal, wood or gas stoves;
- propane grills (NEVER use indoors);
- running cars in attached garages; and
- tobacco smoke.

Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning include headache, nausea, vomiting, weakness, fatigue and confusion. Symptoms can mimic the flu. If several people in the household become ill at the same time, especially during cold weather, they may not have "just the flu" but carbon monoxide poisoning instead.

How to Prevent Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

- Have your heating system serviced yearly.
- Install a Carbon Monoxide Detector.

The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) recommends placing CO detectors on each floor of your home, in sleeping areas, and near any major fuel burning appliance. Detectors should not be placed within five feet of any gas burning appliances or near cooking or bathing areas. Always follow the manufacturer’s directions for proper placement within a given area. Remember, CO detectors are for added safety, not as a replacement for proper use and maintenance of your appliances. According to the CPSC, CO can be detected with CO detectors that meet the requirements of Underwriters Laboratories (UL) standard 2034.