Carbon Monoxide Stats and Facts

FACTS

1. CO poisoning is the leading cause of poisoning deaths in the US. Carbon monoxide is an invisible, odorless, colorless gas created when fuels (such as gasoline, wood, coal, natural gas, propane, oil, and methane) burn incompletely.
2. Occupations that are known to have greater risk for CO poisoning include jobs that require working around combustion sources such as engines and fires and include mechanics, firefighters, longshore workers, diesel engine and forklift operators, and tunnel or toll booth attendants. Other occupations that have been largely overlooked but also carry risk for CO exposure include those as varied as warehouse workers, who use propane or diesel forklifts, and restaurant workers, such as charcoal meat grillers and indoor barbeque workers.
3. CO exposure is the leading cause of fatality resulting from acute chemical inhalation among US workers. Because CO is odorless and tasteless, patients may not be aware of workplace CO exposures. Thus, it is important for clinicians to be familiar with occupational sources of CO.
4. Carbon monoxide (CO) claims the lives of hundreds of people every year and makes thousands more ill. Many household items including gas- and oil-burning furnaces, portable generators, and charcoal grills produce this poison gas.

STATS

- Carbon monoxide poses a serious threat to individuals both at home and on the job. According to the CDC, during 1999 to 2010, a total of 5,149 deaths from unintentional carbon monoxide poisoning occurred in the United States, an average of 430 deaths per year.
- Each year, several thousand American workers are killed

outright from carbon monoxide exposure. Carbon monoxide causes more deaths than any other toxic agent except alcohol. At least another 10,000 workers suffer from the debilitating effects of high-level exposure. Millions more are subject to low-level, long-term carbon monoxide exposure, the effects of which are not well defined.

- More than 400 people in the U.S. die from unintentional carbon monoxide poisoning every year, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. More than 20,000 visit the emergency room, and more than 4,000 others are hospitalized.
- On average, about 170 people in the United States die every year from CO produced by non-automotive consumer products. These products include malfunctioning fuel-burning appliances such as furnaces, ranges, water heaters and room heaters; engine-powered equipment such as portable generators; fireplaces; and charcoal that is burned in homes and other enclosed areas.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that several thousand people go to hospital emergency rooms every year to be treated for CO poisoning.