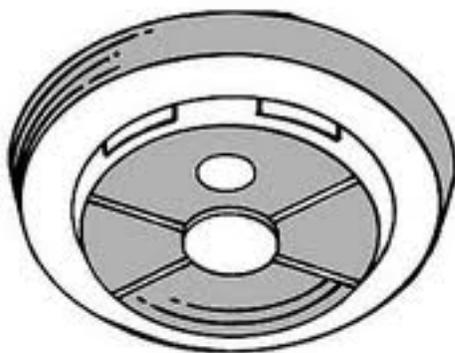


YOUR HEALTH

YOUR SAFETY

OUR CONCERN

HOME SAFETY: INVISIBLE INVADERS



Home is a safe place. It's where you entertain friends, eat, dream. However, even under the most watchful eye weird things can happen in the home, things you wouldn't approve of, like dangerous gases amassing in living areas. This segment touches upon a few of these lesser-known home hazards and provides some ideas for handling these strange invasions.

Killer Chemistry: Carbon Monoxide

According to the Journal of the American Medical Association, carbon monoxide is the leading cause of accidental poisoning deaths in the country. This gas kills approximately 500 people every year. You cannot see or smell carbon monoxide, but at high levels, it can kill a person in minutes.

Whenever you burn fuel—gas, oil, kerosene, wood, charcoal—carbon monoxide (CO) is produced. When fuel-burning appliances are maintained and used properly, the amount of CO produced is usually not hazardous. Dangerous levels of CO can result when these appliances malfunction or are used improperly.

The initial symptoms of CO poisoning are similar to the flu, without the fever. These include:

- Headache.
- Fatigue.
- Confusion.
- Shortness of breath.
- Nausea.
- Dizziness.

If you think you are experiencing any of the symptoms of CO poisoning, get fresh air immediately. Open windows and doors for more ventilation, turn off any combustion appliances, and leave your home. Then call your fire department and report your symptoms.



Poison Prevention: Carbon monoxide poisonings happen because people don't realize the danger. On the bright side, prevention is as easy as installing a CO detector/alarm. Place detectors outside sleeping areas, on the wall about 5ft above the floor. Each floor should have one.

When the alarm sounds and you don't have any symptoms, reset the machine. Should the alarm continue to sound, call the fire department and evacuate your home. Don't come back until a professional finds out why the alarm sounded, and fixes the problem.

Important: A CO2 detector is not a replacement for a smoke detector.



A Fungus Among Us

Indoor mold—the scourge of bathrooms and basements the world over! Usually mold isn't a problem, but occasionally there is an infestation of toxic black mold, known to cause problems for people with allergies, respiratory ailments, or compromised immune systems.

The best strategy for mold control is preventing mold growth. Mold needs a cool, moist environment to flourish. Any way you can eliminate excess humidity and moisture in your home, the better. Some tips are:

- Fix water leaks and seepage as soon as you notice them.
- If there has been a leak or excessive moisture, increase ventilation by opening doors and windows or using a fan.
- Cover cold surfaces (water pipes, etc.) with insulation.
- Keep the indoor air temperature warm.

Failing prevention, mold control means clean-up. If the mold covers more than 2ft or resulted from contaminated water, call professionals to clean it up. Otherwise, it's a do-it-yourself job. Here's how:

- Use a respirator to avoid breathing in spores.
- Wear long gloves and goggles.
- Throw out moldy absorbent/porous materials.
- Clean mold with a solution of 1 cup bleach per gallon water. Apply bleach solution and let it sit for 15min, then dry the area thoroughly.
- Wash off dry mold spots instead of scraping.
- Do not paint over moldy surfaces.

Radon Calling

Radon is a radioactive gas. It is odorless and colorless, and comes from the breakdown of uranium in soil, rock, and water. This gas becomes trapped in buildings, and can concentrate to unsafe levels causing lung cancer over time. According to the Surgeon General, radon is the #2 cause of lung cancer nation-wide, second only to smoking.

Nearly 1 in 15 homes have elevated radon levels (>4 picoCuries per liter air). Testing is the only way to know if you are at risk from radon. It is recommended that all homes be tested from the third floor down. Testing is easy and inexpensive—you can call a professional or use a do-it-yourself kit. There are short term (<90 days) and long-term tests (>90 days), although it is recommended that a short-term test be followed by a long term one for better accuracy. Should you discover a radon problem, all is not lost! There are several proven methods to reduce radon in your home.

The primary method is a vent pipe system and fan, which pulls radon from beneath the house and vents it to the outside. This system, known as a soil suction radon reduction system, does not require major changes to your home. Sealing foundation cracks and other openings makes this kind of system more effective and cost-efficient. Similar systems can also be installed in houses with crawl spaces. Radon contractors can use other methods that may also work in your home. The right system depends on the design of your home and other factors.



SOURCES:

www.epa.gov/mold/moldresources.html

www.epa.gov/iaq/co.html

www.epa.gov/radon/pubs/citguide.html

