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## Health warning about carbon monoxide poisoning from charcoal heating

The NSW Poisons Information Centre is urging people to stop burning coals or charcoal briquettes indoors after 17 people, including nine children, presented to hospital following carbon monoxide poisoning in the past week.

The spike in cases has caused concern for health authorities, particularly with the colder weather and people spending more time at home.

“Carbon monoxide is a colourless, odourless and tasteless gas that is extremely toxic. People may not know they are inhaling it until it's too late,” Dr Darren Roberts, Medical Director of the NSW Poisons Information Centre said.

Most incidents of carbon monoxide poisoning occur when charcoal is burnt inside at night for heat, often in barbeques. It often involves multiple members of a household and can lead to serious health consequences, particularly for children and the elderly.

Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning are non-specific and can include:

- Headache
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Dizziness

Prolonged exposure can lead to unconsciousness and in some instances, permanent brain damage or death.

“It is vital that people never burn barbeque coals indoors or in enclosed spaces. Barbeques and outdoor heaters should only be used outside, in a well ventilated area. Otherwise, the results could be tragic,” Dr Roberts said.

If you think someone has been exposed to carbon monoxide, contact the NSW Poisons Information Centre immediately on 13 11 26.

In an emergency, please dial 000 for ambulance and seek medical assistance.

Further information on carbon monoxide poisoning is available at:

[www.schn.health.nsw.gov.au/files/factsheets/carbon\\_monoxide\\_poisoning-en.pdf](http://www.schn.health.nsw.gov.au/files/factsheets/carbon_monoxide_poisoning-en.pdf)

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