

Carbon Monoxide Inhalation

Symptoms depend on CO level (carboxyhemoglobin)

- CO: 20-40%: Dizziness, headache, weakness, disturbed judgement, decreased visual acuity
- CO: 40-60%: Tachycardia, tachypnea, ataxia, syncope, seizures
- CO: >60%: Coma, death

Diagnosis

- To get CO level, get ABG with carboxyhemoglobin
- Standard pulse oximetry (SpO₂) **CANNOT** screen for CO exposure, as it does not differentiate carboxyhemoglobin from oxyhemoglobin
- ECG, troponin if CO intoxication confirmed.

Management

- Treat with 100% O₂ by tight-fitting mask or ET tube
- Intubation can be considered in severe cases (carboxyhemoglobin > 25%)
- Hyperbaric Oxygen if CO>25%
- Measure CO level q2-4h until <10%
- Must continue treating until carboxyhemoglobin is <5%
- Call Poison control

Source: [Uptodate: CO poisoning](#)

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