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February 29, 2008

Contact Robin Carlascio  
219.263.4656

## **Porter Treats Carbon Monoxide in a Hurry**

VALPARAISO – Whenever there is a chill in the air, Porter physician Michael Woods, MD, knows there is a chance that a patient who comes to the health system’s emergency departments with dizziness or headaches may be a victim of carbon monoxide poisoning.

Dr. Woods, who does double duty in the health system’s emergency department and at Porter’s Wound Care and Hyperbaric Center, said it is fortunate for those in the region that hyperbaric chambers are available so close to home.

“Treatment in a hyperbaric chamber is the best care for those who have severe carbon monoxide poisoning,” he said. “The sooner treatment begins the greater likelihood there will be no residual effects.”

With two hyperbaric medicine units located on the campus of Porter’s Valparaiso Hospital Campus, the health system has successfully treated entire families who have become sick due to carbon monoxide poisoning.

Carbon monoxide is a colorless, odorless gas that is produced as a by-product of combustion. Its danger to humans is that it binds with hemoglobin, depriving the tissues of oxygen.

When a diagnosis of suspected carbon monoxide poisoning is confirmed, Woods said patients are treated in the health system’s hyperbaric chambers.

“It is possible for a single treatment to resolve minor cases of carbon monoxide,” he said. “Often, though, it takes multiple treatments to reduce the amount of carbon monoxide in the blood to acceptable levels.”

Because carbon monoxide is so difficult to detect, Woods said he always suggests that individuals install carbon monoxide detectors in their homes and call the fire department if the detector alarm sounds.

“It is often impossible for people to know something is wrong until they become quite ill,” he said. “It is important for any individual who develops headaches, dizziness, or unexplained neurological symptoms, numbness or tingling to get checked out.”