

LOSS OF CONSCIOUSNESS IN BATHROOMS - BEWARE OF GAS GEYSERS

Ismail Khatri and colleagues reported a case series of seven patients from Shifa International hospital, Islamabad with possible seizures and reversible loss of consciousness in bathrooms. Authors relate these events to use of instant Gas geysers in bathrooms. (ref)

Instant Gas geysers are very common and popular in northern and central parts of Punjab and northern areas of Pakistan including Kashmir. These devices provide hot water only when it is needed thus saving energy and money. It is suggested that combustion of liquid petroleum gas leads to extremely high temperatures that could heat up 2-5 gallons of water per minute. At the same time it produces harmful gases including carbon monoxide, hydrocarbon gases and nitrogen oxides. Manufacturers advise installation of these geysers in well ventilated areas but large numbers of these geysers are installed in poorly ventilated bathrooms as was the case in most of the reported cases of loss of consciousness and seizure like activity in literature. These symptoms are most likely due to carbon monoxide poisoning. To our knowledge there are no reported cases of severe carbon monoxide poisoning leading to death or serious brain damage related to the use of instant gas geysers but there is a potential for this loss. These gas geysers, if not placed in well ventilated areas could be seriously hazardous for young children and elderly.

We believe that this is a serious public health hazard. We suggest placing strong warnings related to installation of these geysers in well ventilated areas by manufacturers. This has to be implemented and monitored by concerned authorities. Manufacturers must be advised and monitored by concerned authorities for placement of warning to consumers. These warnings are needed to be circulated to public by the help of newspapers and media. Manuscript published in this issue of PJNS will definitely raise awareness among physicians for diagnosis and prevention of this condition.

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