



Spring



Summer



Fall



Winter

Poison Ivy

The plant, poison ivy, contains the irritant called urushiol in the form of a resin. Poison ivy leaves are most likely to be in groups of three and notched, but they also can be smooth edged. Poison ivy is usually found growing as vines or shrubs.

A poison ivy reaction occurs from contact with the leaf or internal parts of the stem or root of the plant. The rash appears 8 to 48 hours after exposure to the urushiol. This rash is typically red, contains blisters, and is in a linear or circular pattern. Urushiol can be found under fingernails, on clothing, and on tools unless it is deliberately removed. The resin itself can be active and cause a new rash for up to 3 weeks after exposure. Urushiol is not found in blister fluid and not responsible for spreading the rash. It is not contagious from person to person. If untreated, the rash usually resolves in 3 weeks.

Prevention of Poison Ivy

- The most effective prevention is using a barrier to protect the skin. Clothing serves as an effective barrier but since the urushiol remains on the clothing, it must be removed carefully and laundered without contacting the skin.
- Urushiol can penetrate latex gloves but not rubber gloves.
- A lotion containing 5% quaternium-18 bentonite (IvyBlock) can be applied to the skin and provides a barrier for 4 to 8 hours. It must be washed off and reapplied for continued exposure.

Treatment of Poison Ivy

The most common sites on the body for poison ivy are exposed areas on the arms, legs, and face. The intensity of the rash varies depending on the sensitivity of the person, and the amount and extent of exposure.

- Washing the skin with soap and water inactivates and removes the resin. Washing is most effective if it is done within 15 minutes of exposure.
- Cold, wet compresses are effective in the blistering stage. They should be used for 15 to 30 minutes several times a day for the first 3 days.
- Steroid creams or ointments are helpful to reduce redness and itching. Hydrocortisone can be used on the face, but is usually not strong enough for more than mild cases on the arms or legs. Typically, a prescription strength steroid is needed for these areas.
- Oral steroids are used for severe cases of poison ivy but must be used for at least a week.
- Short, cool tub baths with colloidal oatmeal (Aveeno) can be soothing and help control inflammation.
- Calamine lotion helps control itching but used too long can cause excessive drying of the skin and more inflammation.
- Antihistamines help reduce itching and the older types such as diphenhydramine (Benadryl) help encourage sleep.
- Any exposure to the eyes or eyelids or the development of a honey-colored crust should be evaluated by a health care provider.

Remember!

~ LEAVES OF THREE, LEAVE IT BE ~~~ HAIRY VINES, SCARY VINES ~

Resources

<http://www.poison-ivy.org/>

<http://www.gpnc.org/poison.htm>

<http://www.aad.org/skin-conditions/dermatology-a-to-z/poison-ivy>