Poison Ivy Meeting Kit



Poison ivy is extremely common. It is one of the most common triggers for rashes every year for both kids and adults who spend time outdoors.

KNOW WHAT POISON IVY LOOKS LIKE

- It has three pointed leaves
- The leaves can be shiny
- It is able to grow as a vine or bush
- The leaves can change colors depending on the time of the year- reddish in the spring, green in the summer, and yellow or red in the fall

THE CAUSES OF POISON IVY

85% of the population is allergic to the Urushiol found in poison ivy, oak and sumac plants. It is your body’s immune response to this allergen that causes the painful rash.

URUSHIOL

Urushiol is found in all parts of these plants, including the leaves, stems, and roots, and is even present after the plant has died. Urushiol is absorbed quickly into the skin. It can also be inhaled if the poison plants are burned. The smoke may expose not only the skin to the chemical but also the nasal passages, throat, and lungs. Inhaled Urushiol can cause a very serious allergic reaction.

Symptoms of a Poison Plant Reaction

- The skin becomes red and itchy.
- A rash erupts on the skin, often in a pattern of streaks or patches from where the plant has come into contact with the skin.
- The rash develops into red bumps, called papules, or large, oozing blisters.

POISON IVY CARE – FIRST AID

If your skin is exposed to poison ivy, there are a few things you can do to relieve the pain.

1. **Wash your skin as quickly as possible with soap and cold, running water.** Do this within minutes of coming into contact with the plant to prevent the oil from absorbing into the skin.
2. **Avoid rubbing or scratching the affected skin.** It can cause the skin to break and spread the poison ivy to a larger area.
3. **Cool off.** People with poison ivy exposure tend to find relief from cool baths or cool compresses. You can use a towel with ice cubes wrapped in it on the area, or massage the affected area with an ice cube for relief. Allowing the area to air dry will reduce itching and oozing of blisters.
4. **Use oral or topical antihistamines.** Oral antihistamines such as Benadryl will help to reduce the itch of poison ivy. Use calamine lotion to reduce itching and redness.
5. **Stop the rash from spreading to others.** The fluid from the sores caused by poison ivy is not contagious. The rash caused by poison ivy will only spread to other areas of the body if the oil from the plant is spread.
6. **Wash clothing and shoes.** Be sure to wash the items you were wearing when you came into contact with the poison ivy. Use soap and hot water to remove any oil from the plant.
7. **Give Fido a bath and wash tools.** If a pet was exposed, the oils can spread via your pet's fur, or even on other items such as gardening tools. Thoroughly washing both pets and other items that may have come into contact with poison ivy to remove the oils.

CALL THE DOCTOR WHEN

- You have symptoms of a severe reaction, such as severe swelling and/or difficulty breathing
- You have been exposed to the smoke of burning poison ivy, poison oak, or poison sumac
- The rash covers more than one quarter of your body
- The initial treatment does not relieve symptoms
- You have a temperature over 100 degrees Fahrenheit.
- There is pus, soft yellow scabs, or tenderness on the rash.
- The itching gets worse or keeps you awake at night.
- The rash spreads to your eyes, mouth, genital area, or covers more than one-fourth of your skin area.
- The rash is not improving within a few weeks.
- The rash is widespread and severe.
- You have difficulty breathing.

Poison Plant Reactions Can Be Prevented

- Learn to identify poison ivy, poison oak, and poison sumac, and avoid contact with them.
- Remove these plants from around your home, especially in areas where you may be working or playing.
- When walking in the woods or working in areas where these plants may grow, cover your skin as much as possible by wearing long pants, long-sleeves, shoes, and socks. Pants should be tucked with the boots.
- Do not let pets run in wooded areas where they may be exposed to the poison plants. They can carry Urushiol back home on their fur.
- If exposed, wash the skin as soon as possible. If you get most of the oils off quickly it will help to limit the rash.
- Wash any items or tools that may have been in contact with poison ivy. The

oils of the plant can remain on the objects for long periods of time and you can indirectly get a rash this way.
- Never burn poison ivy to get rid of it. The burning plant can still release oils that could result in a widespread rash for anyone near the fire.

FINAL WORD

Education is key in dealing with poison ivy. Central is to expose two significant misconceptions. The first is poison ivy rash is not spread by weeping blisters and, secondly, poison ivy cannot be spread from person to person (ie) not contagious.