

Poison Ivy



More than half of all persons in the US are allergic to poison ivy. Poison ivy is a vine or plant with three shiny green leaflets that is found on trees, poles, in yards, or fields. The leaves turn red in the fall.

Poison ivy rash is caused by contact with the oil from any part of the plant. In addition to direct skin contact, oil can be found on clothing, pet hair, camping gear, and all items that come into contact with the plant. Smoke from the burning plant can cause an allergic reaction.

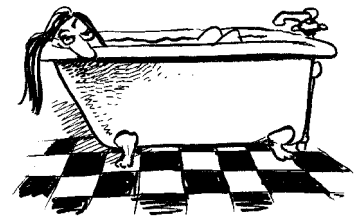
Symptoms:

Poison ivy results in a red, itchy, cloudy, blistered rash which seeps fluid. The first signs develop from 1 - 7 days after exposure and can last for 10 days. New areas of the rash can occur for up to 5 days, since the area of the skin that was exposed the most breaks out first. After the blisters drain, the skin becomes crusty and dry. **Poison ivy cannot be spread by touching the rash or by scratching.**



Treatment:

- Wash the area immediately with soap and water after being exposed. Do not forget to wash clothing, shoes, sleeping bags, and other items exposed.
- Cool showers might help the itch. Tub baths with one cup of baking soda or Aveeno Bath might also help.
- Hydrocortisone cream ½ % or Calamine Lotion can be applied for the treatment of mild cases. These medicines can be purchased at the drug store or grocery. Apply the cream or lotion in thin layers on the skin 3 times a day to decrease the itching. For more severe cases, the doctor may prescribe a stronger steroid cream.
- Take the medicines as directed by the doctor.



When To Call Your Doctor:

- Rash involving the eyes or genitals, or much of the body.
- Signs of infection
 - ▶ Worse redness
 - ▶ Pus
 - ▶ Fever
 - ▶ Pain
 - ▶ Heat
 - ▶ Chills
- Rash that does not improve after 10 days or if you are feeling worse.

If you would like more written information, please call the Center for Health Information at (614)293-3707. You can also make the request by e-mail: health-info@osu.edu.

© Copyright, (10/2002)
Emergency Department
The Ohio State University Medical Center

- ▶ Upon request all patient education handouts are available in other formats for people with special hearing, vision and language needs, call (614) 293-3191.