

MAFES Dawg Tracks



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SAFETY TIPS:

POISON IVY, OAK & SUMAC PROTECTION



Poison Ivy, Oak, and Sumac are the most common allergens in the U.S. According to the Poison Ivy Information Center, approximately one half of our population will suffer from one of these three. Poison Ivy is the most common of the three. The first published records of poison ivy in North America date back to the 1600's.

About 15% of the 120 million Americans who are allergic to poison oak, ivy, and sumac are so highly sensitive that they can break out in a rash and begin to swell in 4 to 12 hours instead of the normal 12 to 24 hours. Their eyes can swell shut and blisters may erupt on their skin.

Urushiol oil is the substance that causes the problem. The word urushi is derived from the Japanese word meaning lacquer. Only 1 nanogram (billionth of a gram) is needed to cause the rash. The average exposure for most people is 100 nanograms. It is said that one-fourth of an ounce of urushiol is all that is needed to cause a rash on every person on the earth. Five-hundred people could itch from the amount that would cover the head of a straight pin. Urushiol oil will stay active for one to five years on the surface of dead plants. Sensitivity to urushiol oil can happen at any time.

Rubbing the rashes won't spread poison ivy to other parts of your body or to another person. The only way to spread it is for the urushiol oil, which is a sticky, resin-like substance that causes the rash, to be left on your hands. You need direct contact to release the urushiol. Stay away from forest fires or direct burning, lawnmowers, edge trimmers, etc. Any of these items cause the oil to become airborne. One old adage is that if you break a blister, you will spread the oil. This is totally untrue; however, it is possible that the blisters can get so big that a visit to the doctor may become necessary to have them drained.

SYMPTOMS OF POISONING:

- Severe itching of the skin
- Later, a red inflammation and skin blistering occur. In severe cases, oozing can develop.

OCCURENCES OF THE POISONING:

- Poisonous oil (urushiol oil) is released through the leaves, roots, stems, and fruit.
- As leaves or stems are bruised, the oil is released as it becomes easier for the oil to leave the leaf.
- The oil can be deposited by direct contact or by shoes, tools, animals, and clothing. It also can be contracted from the soot of burning plants.
- Broken limbs or stems from wind can release the urushiol or tiny holes in leaves cause by insects chewing holes in them.

DEALING WITH THE RASH:

- The urushiol oil may be carried on the fur of animals, shoes, toys tools, clothing, or other objects - then transferred to the

- Usually in 24 to 36 hours after a sensitized person has been exposed, a blistery, itching rash develops. Urushiol binds to the skin within 15 minutes after exposure or contact.
- If possible, washing the affected parts with soap and water will sometime prevent the rash from breaking out. Care must be taken to avoid touching any other part of the body. As mentioned above, it only takes a minute part of the oil to cause irritations.

IDENTIFYING THE PLANTS:

- **Poison Ivy** - The ivy is the most common and widespread plant of the three. Its leaves have 3 to 5 serrated, pointed edges and have bright colors in the fall. It grows as a vine or freestanding plant in the East, Midwest, and the South. In the Northern and Western U.S., it grows as a shrub.
- **Poison Oak** - The oak is more prevalent in the East and West and grows as a shrub with 3 leaves. It produces flowers from August to November that dry and can remain active for months. Its leaves are also bright in the fall.
- **Poison Sumac** - The sumac has 7 to 13 staggered leaflets with one on the tip of the plant. It is found mainly in the Eastern U.S., grows primarily in peat bogs and swamps, and grows as a shrub or small tree.

TREATMENT OF THE RASH:

Over-The-Counter - There are several medications that have been used for the treatment of the rash. Obviously, if it can be caught in time, soap and water is the best remedy. Otherwise, calamine lotion or calagel will produce a drying effect, but they take several days to completely dry it up. Benedryl allergy formula has worked for some folks, as has extra-strength hydrocortisone cream. Gold bond cream has been used effectively in some cases. Prednisone has been prescribed for this use. I'm told that different body chemistries react differently to different creams or lotions.

Home Remedies - The PI center has a section on home remedies for the PI allergy. One interesting remedy is a tablespoon of **honey** each day to fight all allergies and PI is inclusive.

Also mentioned is a **one-half cup of baking soda in a tub of water** at room temperature to relieve the itching. Normal bathing water temperatures won't do the trick. The center mentions many types of home remedies that have been used effectively by other folks. White vinegar wiped on the rash and allowed to dry every 3 to 4 hours and the white vinegar mixed with sea salt or plain table salt and allowed to dry has worked for some. The inside of a banana peel rubbed on the rash or a slice of cucumber rubbed on the rash will relieve the itching and eventually dry it up. The source mentions many other types of home remedies that different people have tried with some success. Personally, I shall stick with cortisone cream and/or calamine lotion.

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Excerpts: www.poisonivy.aesor.com

SAFETY - YOU WILL REGRET- IF YOU FORGET - YOU DO MAKE A DIFFERENCE !!