



Poison Ivy, Oak and Sumac



Identification

Poison Ivy – Three (sometimes more) broad, spoon-shaped leaves or leaflets. Bright red leaves and white or cream berries in the autumn. Grows as a shrub, climbing vine or a low, spreading vine that sprawls through grass.



Poison Oak – Leaves that look like oak leaves, usually three leaflets but sometimes up to seven on each leaf group. Grows as a vine or a shrub.



Poison Sumac – Seven to 13 leaflets on each leaf stem. The leaves have smooth edges and pointed tips. Grows as a shrub or small tree.

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Prevention

- Learn to identify poison ivy, oak, and sumac. Teach children to identify them as soon as they are able.
- Wear long sleeves, long pants and socks when walking in areas where these plants may grow.
- Skin products can be applied before exposure to reduce the risk of a rash.
- Remove these plants if they grow near your home or workplace.
- Do NOT burn poison ivy, oak, or sumac to get rid of it. The resins can be spread via smoke and can cause severe reactions in people who are downwind.
- Be aware of resins carried by pets.

Post-Exposure Measures

- Wash skin thoroughly with soap and warm water. Because the plant oil enters skin quickly, try to wash it off within 30 minutes.
- Scrub under fingernails with a brush to prevent spreading the plant oil to other parts of the body.
- Wash clothing and shoes with soap and hot water as the plant oils can linger on them.
- Immediately bathe animals to remove the plant oil from their fur, but wear gloves and other protective equipment to prevent self-exposure.
- Stay cool and apply cool compresses to your skin – body heat and sweating can aggravate the itching.
- Calamine lotion and hydrocortisone cream can be applied to the skin to reduce itching and blistering.
- Bathing in lukewarm water with an oatmeal bath product (available in drugstores) may soothe itchy skin. Aluminum acetate (Domeboro solution) soaks can help to dry the rash and reduce itching.
- If creams, lotions or bathing do not stop the itching, antihistamines may be helpful.
- In severe cases, especially for a rash around the face or genitals, a health care provider may prescribe steroids, taken by mouth or given by injection.
- Wash tools and other objects with a dilute bleach solution or rubbing alcohol.
- Do NOT touch skin or clothing that may still have the plant resins on it.

