

POISON IVY (Toxicodendron radicans)

What is Poison Ivy?

Poison Ivy usually has three notched leaflets per stem (“Leaves of three, let it be”) which can vary in color from red in early spring, green in later spring, red or orange in autumn, and will produce white berries close to the stem base of the leaflets. Plant



forms include climbing vines, bushy shrubs or ground cover. Poison ivy is extremely adaptable in a wide variety of climates and, as a result, it thrives in most of North America. The entire plant can cause a serious rash if any part comes into contact with skin. Urushiol (you-ROO-shee-ol) is the main culprit of the irritant oil in plants of the Genus Toxicodendron. The oil from Poison Ivy is extremely stable and can potentially stay around forever.

How is Poison Ivy contracted?

Poison Ivy is contracted by coming in direct contact with any part of the plant - leaves, stems, roots or indirectly from any item that has been exposed to the plant (clothing, tools, animals, etc.). The oil from Poison Ivy penetrates within minutes and binds with skin proteins. The plants are also poisonous if swallowed or smoke is inhaled from burning plants.



Symptoms

Symptoms include skin redness or streaks where the plant brushed against the skin (from mild to severe), small bumps or larger raised areas (hives), itching, swelling and blisters filled with fluid that may leak.

Treatment

Initial treatment consists of washing the area with water or a product like Tecnu immediately after contact with the plants. To relieve symptoms, use wet compresses and take cool baths. Nonprescription antihistamines and calamine lotion also may help relieve symptoms. Moderate or severe cases of the rash may require treatment by a doctor, who may prescribe corticosteroid pills, creams, ointments, or injections. Without treatment, the rash usually lasts from 10 days to 3 weeks, but in people who are very sensitive to urushiol, the rash may take up to 6 weeks to heal



How to avoid

The best way to prevent exposure is to learn to identify and avoid the plants. When you cannot avoid contact with the plants, heavy clothing (long pants, long-sleeved shirt, and vinyl gloves) and barrier creams or lotions may help protect you.

Information Provided by: Florida’s Poison Centers

MACTEC Engineering

For More information visit these sites:

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

<http://www.webmd.com/allergies/tc/poison-ivy-oak-or-sumac-topic-overview>

Source: Deborah Owen, August 1, 2011