



## **POISON IVY**

This handout was written to answer some of the questions most often asked about poison ivy rashes. Feel free to ask your nurse or doctor to go over any information you do not understand.

### **WHAT IS POISON IVY?**

Poison ivy grows as a vine or low shrub. Its leaves grow in groups of three. The leaves are usually green, but young leaves may be red or reddish in color. The plant may produce yellow-green flowers and greenish-white berries.

The plant, especially the leaves, contains an oil called urushiol. This is the oil that causes a poison ivy rash.

### **HOW DO I GET A POISON IVY RASH?**

You may get a poison ivy rash anytime you come in contact with the oil (urushiol) from the plant. This could happen by:

1. Rubbing your clothing against the plant or leaves and then touching your clothes
2. Directly touching the poison ivy plant, leaves and/or roots
3. Petting or rubbing against animals that have oil on their fur from rubbing against the plant
4. Inhaling (breathing in) the smoke from a burning poison ivy plant.
5. By later touching tools, clothing or car vinyl that came in contact with the plant and has not been washed. The oil, even though dry, may remain active for several months

### **HOW CAN I PREVENT MY CHILD FROM GETTING A POISON IVY RASH**

There are several ways to prevent your child from getting a poison ivy rash:

1. Teach your child what the plant looks like and where it grows. Tell your child to avoid touching the plant. Remember, "Leaflets three--let it be."

2. Wear long sleeves, long pants and gloves in heavily weeded or wooded areas.
3. Wash your child's skin immediately with soap and cool water after walking in wooded areas or coming into contact with the plant. Try to wash within 30 minutes after exposure.

### **HOW WILL I KNOW IF MY CHILD HAS A POISON IVY RASH?**

The signs and symptoms of a poison ivy rash are:

1. A raised itchy rash with blisters. Sometimes, there is swelling in the area of the rash. The rash rarely occurs on the scalp, palms of hands or soles of feet.
2. The rash usually occurs within 24-48 hours after your child has come in contact with the oil. However, the rash may not appear until 10 days after contact with the plant.
3. After several days, the blisters may break and oozing sores may begin to crust over.

### **HOW DO YOU TREAT A POISON IVY RASH?**

You may treat a poison ivy rash by:

1. Applying cool compresses to the affected areas
2. Applying Calamine® lotion to the skin to decrease the itching
3. Using over-the-counter Benadryl®. Remember, you need to follow the directions on the bottle

### **WHEN DO I NEED TO CALL THE DOCTOR?**

You will need to call your child's doctor if:

1. Your child's rash is severe.
2. The rash is on your child's face or genitals.
3. The rash covers a large part of the body.

***This handout is for general information only. It should not be considered complete. For further information about poison ivy and your child, please ask your doctor.***

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