



**Waukesha County
Public Health Division
Fact Sheet**

Poison Ivy (Oak-Sumac)

What is Poison Ivy?

Poison Ivy (Oak-Sumac) is a poisonous plant with serrated-edges and three pointed leaves. It can be found in the Midwestern, Southern, and Eastern parts of the United States.

Who gets a Poison Ivy reaction?

People who come into direct contact with the Poison Ivy plant's oil will likely have a reaction.

How is Poison Ivy spread?

Poison Ivy is spread through direct contact with the plant oil, urushiol. When a plant's stem or leaf has been cut or crushed, the oil will be released. Indirect contact can also occur from a pet's fur or objects such as clothing, gardening tools, and even from the smoke of a burning plant. Poison Ivy is not spread by skin-to-skin contact after the exposed area has been washed or by contaminated objects that have been thoroughly cleaned with soap and water. Oozing from blisters and swimming, bathing, or showering will not spread the rash.

What are the symptoms of Poison Ivy?

A red, itchy rash will first appear after poison ivy has been in contact with the skin,. Swelling, blistering and oozing may also occur. Blisters reach their peak in several days, they break open, the oozing sores crust over, and then the sores disappear.

How soon do symptoms appear?

Symptoms will appear within of 12-48 hours after exposure.

When and for how long is a person able to spread Poison Ivy?

Once a rash has developed it cannot be spread to other parts of the body or to other people. Poison Ivy can only be spread by contact with the oil, urushiol.

Do past contacts with Poison Ivy make a person immune?

Past infection with Poison Ivy does not make one immune to it.

Is there a treatment for Poison Ivy?

The affected area should be washed as soon as possible with mild soap and cool water. Change clothes. Itching can be treated with cool compresses or over-the-counter preparations. Contact your physician if rash is severe or involves the eyes, face or genitalia.

What can a person or community do to prevent the spread of Poison Ivy?

Learn to recognize what Poison Ivy looks like. Remember: Leaves of three, let it be! If you find the plant growing in your yard, use gloves to pull the plant up by its roots and dispose of it carefully. After using the gloves, wash them or dispose of them properly.