Poison Ivy Stats and Facts

FACTS

1. Poison ivy, poison oak and poison sumac are plants that contain an oil called urushiol, which causes the characteristic red, raised, blistering, intensely itchy rash.
2. **Not Everyone is Allergic to These Plants.**

The degree of the reaction you have to these plants (or whether you have a reaction at all) varies from person to person, depending on how sensitive your immune system is to the urushiol oil. People who aren’t sensitive to urushiol (about 15% of the population) may be exposed to the oil and have no reaction at all.

3. **Clothing is the First Line of Defense.**

The first line of defense is to cover as much skin as possible. By wearing long sleeve shirts and long pants, and wearing gardening gloves when you’re working outdoors, you can prevent the plants from coming into contact with your skin.

4. **The Rash is Not Contagious.**

In order to develop the allergic rash, you have to come into contact with the plant itself, which means that the poison ivy/oak/sumac rash isn’t contagious from person to person.

5. **Medications Can Clear the Rash Up Faster.**

There are several classes of effective medications that can alleviate uncomfortable symptoms and help the rash resolve faster, including antihistamines, steroids and topical creams. it’s wise to see a medical provider as soon as possible to determine which medication is right for you.

STATS

- Each year, an estimated 25-40 million people in the U.S. will feel the infamous itch of poison ivy, a plant found throughout North America that typically grows in the form of a vine often along riverbanks.
- This itchy rash will appear one or two days after they have been exposed to the plant, and the condition can last anywhere from 10 days to three weeks. More than 50% of people are sensitive to the colorless, odorless resin, urushiol, found in the leaves of poison ivy.
- All parts of the poison ivy plant, including the roots, contain the poisonous resin urushiol. Contact with any broken part of the plant may cause a reaction. Most people develop symptoms 24 to 48 hours after contact.
- According to the Mayo Clinic, poison ivy rash is caused by an allergic reaction to an oily resin called urushiol (u-ROO-she-ol). This oil is in the leaves, stems, and roots of poison ivy, poison oak, and poison sumac, and is prevalent in most of the country.
- In fact, approximately 75 percent of the population will have an allergic reaction when exposed to the oil.
- Illinois Wesleyan University stated that only 1 nanogram (billionth of a gram) can cause an allergic reaction. The university wrote that most people are exposed to 100 nanograms of urushiol.
- 500 people could start feeling itchy by the amount of oil covering the head of pen.
- 1/4 of an ounce of urushiol can cause a rash on everyone on earth.
- It is normal for urushiol to stay active on any surface, including dead plants for 1 to 5 years.
- The name urushiol is of Japanese origin, from the Japanese word urushi which means lacquer.