

A walk in the woods or garden may become an itchy experience if you encounter poison ivy, poison oak, or poison sumac. Contact with these plants usually occurs when you're pulling weeds or cleaning up at the cabin, gardening around the edges of the lawn, or exploring in wooded areas.

Poison Ivy, Poison Sumac, Poison Oak



Poison Ivy



Poison Sumac



Poison Oak

Causes

The rash that occurs after contact with poison ivy, oak, or sumac is caused by urushiol, an almost invisible, clear-to-slightly-yellow oil that comes from any cut or crushed part of the leaves, stem, or vine crawling on the ground. The oil can be carried for up to 3 days on the paws or fur of cats and dogs. It can be carried on shoes, clothing, or on garden tools for weeks or months.

Symptoms

When urushiol touches the skin, it penetrates within minutes. In 12 to 48 hours a red, itchy rash and tiny, weeping blisters may appear.

Treatment

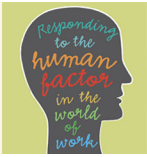
Usually exposure to these poisonous plants can be treated at home with self-care. If the rash covers a large area or involves your face or eyes, see your doctor. Your doctor may treat a very bad reaction with cortisone.

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Claremont EAP distributes this newsletter to provide employees with general behavioral health information. If you have concerns about these or other behavioral health issues, you can call Claremont to arrange for assistance. You will be directed to an appropriate, experienced professional who can offer guidance in a variety of work and family matters.

For confidential help, call: **800-834-3773**
or visit claremonteap.com



Self-Care Steps for Poison Ivy/Poison Oak/Poison Sumac

- Wash suspected areas of contact with soap and water as quickly as you can. If necessary, use water from a nearby stream, lake, or garden hose. Washing skin within 60 minutes of exposure will lessen your reaction.
- Use water to rinse off pets, clothes, shoes, and camping or gardening gear if you or your pets have been in infested areas.
- Tecnu is a solvent specially designed to remove urushiol oil from the skin. It needs to be flushed off with water to avoid spreading the urushiol to other parts of your skin.
- Cool compresses are the best treatment for a rash. Calamine lotion or an over-the-counter (OTC) topical cortisone preparation such as Cortaid may also be used to relieve initial itching and help dry the rash.
- OTC antihistamine pills (such as Bendadryl) may relieve itching. However, these medications may cause drowsiness.
- A soak in lukewarm water mixed with an oatmeal bath product or baking powder may soothe irritated skin and dry oozing blisters over large areas.

Preventive Care for Poison Ivy/Poison Oak/Poison Sumac

Your best defense against these poisonous plants is to learn to identify them by sight, and watch what you're handling when gardening, hiking, or cleaning up around the yard. Try not to break the plant, because the oil is in all parts of the plant.

Poison ivy usually grows east of the Rocky Mountains as a vine or shrub. Its leaves are in clusters of three, and it has yellowish-white berries. It grows easily and is widespread both inside and outside city limits.

Poison oak grows west of the Rockies as a shrub, small tree, or, less often, a vine. It has greenish-white berries and has leaves in clusters of three, similar to those of poison ivy.

Poison sumac is found in swampy, boggy areas in the South and northern wetlands. It's a tall shrub with 7 to 13 pointed, small leaves per branch and cream-colored berries.

If you have to work near infested areas, wear long pants, long sleeves, rubber gloves, and boots. Over-the-counter barrier products, such as Ivy Block and Stokoguard, can also offer protection.

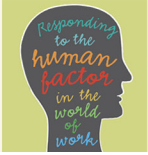
Krames Staywell

Claremont EAP

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Simple Summer Safety

Before you run to the beach or go to the pool, read these tips to help you stay safe this summer.



Sunscreen

Protect your children's skin from the sun. Use sunscreen to cut down their risk of skin cancer later in life.

Here are some tips:

- Remember that sun exposure near water is increased by reflection from the water. You need to be particularly careful to avoid sunburn
- Wear a waterproof sunscreen of at least SPF 30 that protects against both UVA and UVB. Reapply the sunscreen periodically as recommended by the directions
- When out of the water slip on a light-colored comfortable clothing to protect against excessive sun exposure
- Use a beach umbrella or find shade when not actually in the water
- Wear UV proof sunglasses when not in the water

Safety in water

Swimming is fun for the whole family. It's great exercise. Although swimming is fun and healthy, you must take care because accidents can happen.

Follow these tips to help prevent drowning:

- Teach children to swim. If you can't teach them, enroll any child 4 or older in swimming lessons. Sign up for lessons yourself.
- If you have a pool at home, put a fence around the pool to keep small children out.
- Do not allow children to run or horseplay around the pool since wet surfaces are slick.
- Watch young children at ALL times. Don't do anything else while you are supposed to be watching the children. Don't talk on the phone, read or mow the lawn.
- Learn CPR, particularly if you have a pool at home.

Swimmer's ear

Swimmer's ear is an infection of the ear canal that can happen to children who spend a lot of time swimming underwater.

Here are some tips to help prevent a water-related ear infection:

- Wear earplugs.
- Clean the outer area of the ear but not the inside.
- After swimming put two drops of a 50/50 mixture of rubbing alcohol and vinegar in each ear. The alcohol breaks the water tension and helps the canal dry. The vinegar is anti-bacterial and anti-fungal.
- Never put anything in the ear. This includes cotton swabs.

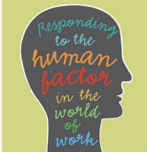
Talk to your doctor if your child complains about:

- Itching in the ears or a feeling of stuffed-up ears
- Pain, tenderness or swelling of the ears
- Fluid draining from the ears
- Hearing loss

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Get Real Behind the Wheel

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) blames inattentive or distracted drivers for up to 30 percent of motor vehicle crashes -- an estimated 1.2 million a year.

In a study by the University of North Carolina Highway Safety Research Center (HSRC), drivers knew they were being watched. Yet 15 percent drove distracted.

The study found that drivers were most often distracted by something outside their vehicle, followed by adjusting a radio or CD player, according to the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, which funded the study. Other distractions included talking with other people in the car, adjusting heating or air conditioning controls, eating or drinking, using a cell phone and smoking.

Different age groups seemed to be distracted by different things, the study said. Drivers under 20 were most often distracted by tuning the radio or changing CDs; young adults were most often distracted by other passengers; older drivers (older than 65) were most often distracted by objects or events happening outside the vehicle.

"We want people to see driving as the number one task and try to minimize all other activities," says Scott Osberg, Ph.D., director of research for the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety. "Driving is no time to be multitasking."



What to do

OK, you've been told since you began driving to keep your eyes on the road and your hands on the wheel. But what should and shouldn't you do?

For one thing, don't use a cell phone while driving. Cell phones that make you punch in the numbers and functions are bad enough. But even with supposedly safer, hands-free, speech-activated models, "there has been research showing that the biggest problem is cognitive distraction," says Jane Stutts, Ph.D., HSRC's manager of epidemiological studies and coauthor of its distracted driving study. "People talking on the phone ... are not aware of cars and what's going on around them."

The right way: Make the call before you begin driving or after you pull off in a safe place, she says.

It's the same with chatty passengers or cranky kids. Don't get so caught up that you lose track of what you're doing. Rather than turning around to calm or discipline the little ones, Dr. Osberg says, "Pull over if it's serious and they persist."

Some objects in a car have become more complex, so they're more distracting. Car radios were once fairly simple. "Now," Dr. Stutts says, "it's 15 buttons and scans and seeks and CDs."

Our eating habits have changed, too. "The sheer number of drive-through restaurants means people are doing more eating and drinking in cars," Dr. Stutts says. Adds Dr. Osberg: "A pretzel in the car is OK. A bowl of soup is not the best idea."

Smoking, primping, reading, writing, rubbernecking -- even new navigation systems that make you look down at the screen -- can all distract you. "Anytime you look away from the road, it is a danger," Dr. Osberg says.

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Claremont EAP
can help address all of these issues!

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