

Toolbox Talks

Poison Ivy Awareness

Poison Ivy Facts:

- Grows in vines & small low lying shrubs and has three distinct leaves
- The leaves change color; bright red in the spring, green in the summer, reddish/yellow/orange in the fall
- Uruashiol is contained in/on the root, stem, & leaves of the plant
- Uruashiol is EXTREMELY potent; 1/4 ounce would be enough to give the entire Earth's population a rash
- Uruashiol can stay active on clothing/materials for up to 5 years
- Poison Ivy grows everywhere in the US except at extreme altitudes & far western deserts.
- A rash develops after a few days or a week of exposure & can last up to 3 weeks, peaking with blisters

Common Misconceptions:

- Weeping blisters DO NOT spread a poison ivy rash. Blisters from poison ivy are the same as any other blister & do not contain uruashiol
- You CAN NOT spread poison ivy from person to person. Uruashiol will be absorbed by the skin within 30 minutes of exposure, once the oil is absorbed by the skin it can no longer be passed to another person.

Preventing Exposure:

- Know the area you are working in, look for poison ivy when working outdoors
- Wear long pants that cover your legs
- Never weed whack or burn poison ivy
- Safely remove any clothes that may have come into contact with poison ivy, keep these separate from other dirty cloths & immediately wash them.
- Companies now market "poison ivy block" which supposedly prevents poison ivy from entering the pores of the skin

Treating Your Skin After Exposure:

- If you know you were exposed within the last HOUR to poison ivy, wash your skin with a poison ivy soap (Technu) & lots of COLD water
- After one hour, washing will most likely not prevent a "rash" however, still wash with an abundance of cool water & poison ivy wash to remove any excess uruashiol that maybe on the skin
- After a rash has already broken out, wash your body with the hottest water tolerable/safe to help relieve itching for a few hours
- Don't rupture blisters that form, a blister is a natural barrier that forms to keep the damaged skin underneath sanitized.
- There are various cream/ointments that are sold over the counter to help relieve the itching sensation from a poison ivy rash
- If a severe rash breaks out, seek medical attention
- If you think you inhaled smoke from burning poison ivy or had an open cut/sore exposed to poison ivy seek immediate medical attention



Rash/blisters can form after a few days or a week



Poison Ivy has three distinct leaflets



Late summer/early fall berries found on poison ivy ripen & turn a pale white color

Toolbox Talks

The Difference Between Poison Oak, Sumac, & Ivy

Poison Oak

Poison oak is more common in the western United States, but it is also found in the eastern United States &, rarely, in the Midwest.

- * Has leaves that look like oak leaves, usually three leaflets but sometimes up to seven on each leaf group.
- * Grows as a vine or a shrub.



Poison oak

Poison Ivy

Poison ivy is found everywhere in the United States except Alaska & Hawaii. It is most common in the eastern & midwestern states. It is less common outside the United States, but still found on every continent.

- * Usually has three broad, spoon-shaped leaves or leaflets, but it can have more. The phrase, "Leaves of three? Let it be." may help you remember what poison ivy looks like.
- * Grows as a climbing vine or a low, spreading vine that sprawls through grass (more common in eastern states) or as a shrub (more common in northern states, Canada, & the Great Lakes region).
- * Often grows along rivers, lake fronts, & ocean beaches.
- * Has bright red leaves and white or cream berries in the autumn.

Poison Sumac

Poison sumac is much less common than poison ivy or poison oak. It is found in wooded, swampy areas, such as Florida & parts of other southeastern states. It is also found in wet, wooded areas in the northern United States.

- * Has 7 to 13 leaflets on each leaf stem. The leaves have smooth edges & pointed tips.
- * Grows as a shrub or small tree.



Poison sumac



Poison ivy

© Healthwise, Incorporated