

Poison Ivy - Oak - Sumac

DEFINITION

- A very itchy, blistering rash caused by contact with the poison ivy plant

Symptoms

- Localized redness, swelling, and weeping blisters
- Located on exposed body surfaces (such as the hands) or areas touched by the hands (e.g., the face or genitals). May be carried by pets.
- Extreme itchiness
- Onset 1 or 2 days after the patient was in a forest or field
- Rash is shaped like streaks or lines

Cause

- Caused by oil from poison ivy, poison oak, and poison sumac plants

Return to School

- Poison ivy or oak is not contagious to others. No need to miss any school or daycare.

See More Appropriate Topic (instead of this one) If

- It doesn't look like poison ivy, see [RASH - LOCALIZED AND CAUSE UNKNOWN.](#)



Poison Ivy Rash on Forearm

- The oil contained in the plant leaves irritates the skin.
- The redness and blistering from the rash is often arranged in streaks or lines, because the leaf brushes across the body in a line as an individual walks past.



Poison Ivy Plant

- Leaves in threes characterize poison ivy.
- *Toxicodendron radicans*. This plant is common in the eastern United States.
- From the CDC's Public Health Image Library (<http://phil.cdc.gov>), ID#1110, in the public domain.

WHEN TO CALL YOUR DOCTOR

Call Your Doctor Now (night or day) If

- Your child looks or acts very sick
- Difficulty breathing or severe coughing following exposure to burning weeds
- Looks infected (e.g., soft yellow scabs, pus or spreading redness)

Call Your Doctor Within 24 Hours (between 9 am and 4 pm) If

- You think your child needs to be seen
- Swelling is severe (e.g., the eyes are swollen shut)
- Severe poison ivy reaction in the past
- Rash involves more than one fourth of the body
- Face, eyes, lips or genitals are involved
- Severe itching (e.g., can't sleep)
- Big blisters or oozing sores

Call Your Doctor During Weekday Office Hours If

- You have other questions or concerns
- Rash lasts longer than 3 weeks

Parent Care at Home If

- Mild poison ivy or sumac and you don't think your child needs to be seen
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HOME CARE ADVICE FOR MILD POISON IVY

1. **Steroid Cream:** Apply 1% hydrocortisone cream 4 times per day to reduce itching. Keep the cream in the refrigerator (Reason: It feels better if applied cold).
2. **Local Cold:** Soak the involved area in cool water for 20 minutes or massage it with an ice cube as often as necessary to reduce itching and oozing.
3. **Antihistamines:** If itching persists, give Benadryl orally every 6 hours as needed (see Dosage table).
4. **Avoid Scratching:** Cut the fingernails short and discourage scratching to prevent a secondary infection from bacteria.
5. **More Poison Ivy:** If new blisters occur several days after the first ones, your child probably has ongoing contact with poison ivy oil. To prevent recurrences, bathe all dogs or other pets. Also, wash all clothes and shoes that were with your child on the day of exposure.
6. **Contagiousness:** Poison ivy or oak is not contagious to others. No need to miss any school or daycare.
7. **Expected Course:** Usually lasts 2 weeks. Treatment reduces the severity of symptoms, not how long they last.
8. **Call Your Doctor If:**
 - o Poison ivy lasts for over 3 weeks
 - o It looks infected
 - o Your child becomes worse

And remember, contact your doctor if your child develops any of the "Call Your Doctor" symptoms.

Disclaimer: This information is not intended be a substitute for professional medical advice. It is provided for educational purposes only. You assume full responsibility for how you choose to use this information.

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