

## Poison Ivy

Dermatitis is the primary symptom seen after exposure to poison ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*). Poison ivy is a woody shrub or vine that spreads along the ground. It has alternative leaves with 3 characteristic leaflets that are lobed at various intervals.

The reaction may occur after being exposed to the allergen urushiol (part of the oily resin) that may be released after the plant has been injured. Dermatitis generally appears 24-48 hours after exposure or may be delayed from 8 hours to 2 weeks. This delayed reaction may explain why the dermatitis seems to be spreading, in some cases, after initial signs and symptoms are seen. The severity of the reaction depends upon the patient's degree of sensitivity, the amount of contact with the allergen and the area of skin exposed.

Treatment includes removal of affected clothing, washing thoroughly the affected areas with soap and water, cool compresses and maybe an astringent such as Burrow's Solution. The mainstay of treatment is the use of corticosteroids. Mild dermatitis consisting of regional erythema, edema and papula may be treated with steroid cream or lotion. Systemic oral steroids are more effective in treating the oozing vesicular stages. Topical antihistamines are ineffective, although oral antihistamines are useful in the relief of pruritis. Avoid use of sensitizers such as benzocaine, zirconium or topical antihistamines.

**If you have any questions regarding exposure and/or treatment to poison ivy, please call the poison center at 1-800-222-1222 ...24 hours a day 7 days a week.**