

Poison Ivy Information

“Leaves of three, leave it be...”

Poison Ivy is well known for causing the itchy rash that plagues many of us in the summer months. The rash is caused by the oils within all parts of the plant.



1. What can I do to prevent getting poison ivy?

Learn to identify the plant at all times of the year: Practice identifying poison ivy in photos and in the field. Ask naturalists, consult books or look on the internet until you feel comfortable with identifying it in all seasons. You can get poison ivy even in the winter.

Stay on the path: When visiting parks or other public areas, stay on the paths. Poison ivy grows along bike paths, walking paths, driveways and parking lots. Stay on the path and don't wander.

Remove poison ivy from your yard: You can remove your poison ivy either by herbicide spraying or hand pulling. Be sure to wear gloves and long sleeves if removing the plant by hand. Do NOT burn any part of the plant. This can be extremely dangerous since you could inhale the oils causing throat and lung issues. If you pull poison ivy by hand, burying is a safe, effective means of disposal. Be sure to bury the plant at least a foot below ground. The plant will decompose, adding nutrients in the soil.

Wash your clothes and boots: Many people get poison ivy from their clothes. The oils from the plants can easily get on your boots and clothes and rub off on your skin. Be sure to wash your clothes and clean your boots after contact with poison ivy.

Watch where your pets wander: Pets can gather the oils of poison ivy on their coats. In turn, you can get the oils on your hands by petting your dog. If you know your pet has been in a patch of poison ivy, bathe it immediately.

2. What can I do if I touch poison ivy?

If you know you have come into direct contact with poison ivy, wash off the affected area as soon as possible with warm water and soap. This will remove the oils from the skin, preventing the rash. Alcohol wipes, Tecnu skin cleanser and Zanfel Poison Ivy Wash are effective in removing the oils.

3. If I come in contact with poison ivy will I get the rash?

Not always. If you remove the oils from your skin before they can soak in, your body will not react and a rash will not form. If you are part of a lucky few, a small percentage of the population (<15%) is not allergic to poison ivy and will not react to the oils.

4. Is it true if I scratch poison ivy it will spread?

No, poison ivy cannot spread by scratching. The only way for poison ivy to spread is if you get the oils on your skin from the plant.

5. Is there any treatment after I get poison ivy?

Poison ivy is difficult to treat once you get it. Different creams such as Caladryl are good for soothing the itch. In severe cases, steroid injections, antihistamine pills and over the counter pain medicines can help alleviate the discomfort. It is best to seek out your doctor before making any of these decisions.



“Hairy rope, don't be a dope...”



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