
Health Hints

A New Season Of Itching In The Great Outdoors

(NAPSA)—A rise in temperature can signal a new season of itching in the great outdoors, brought on by some of nature's finest: mosquitoes, wood ticks or, even worse, poison ivy. For those who know poison ivy's relentless itch, there's no doubt that an allergic reaction to this plant should not be taken lightly. Before you head out for a hike or send the kids off to the park, be prepared.

"Poison ivy grows plentifully in nearly every state in the U.S.," said Sally Naser of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy. "I try to teach trail volunteers how to recognize poison ivy, so they avoid it altogether. But in places like the natural boundaries of the Appalachian Trail, that's a lot easier said than done." That nasty rash is caused by an allergic response to urushiol, an oil found in poison ivy, oak and sumac that causes a reaction in 20 to 30 million people in the U.S. annually. Urushiol is so potent that it only takes a tiny brush with these plants to cause an outbreak. Even staying indoors may not keep you safe—many poison ivy outbreaks are caused by indirect contact. In addition to getting it directly from touching the plant, you can also get it by petting your dog, who may have picked up the oil during a romp through the woods.

Naser offers the following tips for identifying, preventing and treating poison ivy:

- Learn to recognize and avoid plants that could be poison ivy, oak or sumac. These plants usually have three leaflets, but may vary from groups of three to nine,



To stay itch-free, remember, leaves of three, let it be.

and grow as ground cover, vine or shrub. When in doubt, don't touch! Every part of the plant—the leaves, stems and roots—carries urushiol and can cause a reaction.

- To prevent exposure, wear clothes that fully cover the legs and arms. When you return home, wash your clothing and use a removal scrub on skin to be sure.

- If you are out on the trail, bring prevention with you, such as Cortaid® Poison Ivy Care Toxin Removal Cloths. These easy-to-use, portable cloths quickly wipe away the urushiol and easily fit into a backpack or fanny pack.

If you already have an outbreak, you can help ease the pain with a product such as Cortaid® Poison Ivy Care Treatment Spray, which forms a clear, flexible barrier to lock in the medicine on the skin, helping to relieve the pain and itching so that the rash can heal.

With the proper preparation and protection, you can enjoy the great outdoors while staying itch-free year-round.