



# Poison Ivy

## Fact Sheet

### What is it?

The poison ivy plant is a woody perennial easily identified by its 3 glossy leaves. This plant is found throughout southern Ontario.

### How can poison ivy affect you?

Exposure to this plant can cause an allergic reaction. Urushiol, the chemical in the oil of the poison ivy plant can cause itching, burning and a blistering rash (dermatitis). These symptoms appear from a few hours to a few days after exposure.

### How can you come in contact with the oil from poison ivy?

People can be exposed to the oil by:

- direct contact with any part of the plant
- handling objects or clothing that have brushed against the plant
- handling pets that have brushed against the plant
- coming into contact with smoke from the burning of the plant

It is important to note that the blisters cannot spread the rash to other people.

### How can poison ivy dermatitis be prevented?

If there is a chance of exposure, wear clothing, including gloves, that protects you. Wash the clothing after exposure and prior to wearing it again. Footwear should be sponged off.

Do not burn the plant. It should be disposed of in a sealed bag or killed with an herbicide and then buried.

### How is poison ivy dermatitis treated?

- If exposed, wash your skin thoroughly to remove the oil. Use a detergent that contains phosphates.
- If there is eye contact, flush with a gentle stream of lukewarm water for 15 minutes. Call your doctor if the irritation does not go away.
- If a rash develops, avoid scratching.
- To relieve the itch, try compresses soaked in cool water. Calamine lotion, baking soda and hydrocortisone creams can also be soothing.
- People with severe local reactions or reactions over a large part of their body should call their doctor.

### Other Questions?

Talk to your health care provider or call our Communicable Disease Program at 613-966-5500 x349. Toll Free 1-800-267-2803 | TTY Dial 711 (1-800-267-6511) | [www.hpepublichealth.ca](http://www.hpepublichealth.ca)

### Reference

- Kingston Frontenac Lennox & Addington Health Unit, Poison Ivy, March 2010.

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