



## What is Poison Ivy?

Poison ivy, poison oak or poison sumac causes an itchy rash to break out on the skin. It is caused by an oil, known as urushiol, found in the poison ivy, sumac and oak plants. When skin comes in contact with the oil, it causes an itchy, blistering rash that is often painful and irritating. Most rashes will go away on their own and can be treated at home, however, if you experience trouble breathing, the rash covers most of your body, you experience swelling, especially if an eyelid swells shut or the rash is on your face or genitals, you should go to the emergency room right away. These symptoms could be a sign of a serious allergic reaction and should be treated right away.

Perhaps the best option is to prevent poison ivy, poison sumac and poison oak from happening in the first place. The best way to do this is to know how to identify the plant and avoid it. Here is what to look for when identifying these plants:

### **Poison Ivy**

- Each leaf has 3 small leaflets.
- It typically grows as a vine.
- In Spring, it grows yellow-green flowers
- It may have green berries that turn off-white in early fall.

### **Poison Oak**

- Each leaf has 3 small leaflets.
- It most often grows as a shrub.
- Can have yellow-white berries.

### **Poison Sumac:**

- Each leaf has a row of paired leaflets and another leaflet at the end.
- It grows as a tall shrub or small tree.
- Leaves often have spots that look like blotches of black paint.
- May have yellow-white berries.

Source: Excellence in Medical Dermatology™ Excellence in Dermatopathology™. (n.d.). Retrieved April 15, 2015, from <https://www.aad.org/dermatology-a-to-z/diseases-and-treatments/m---p/poison-ivy/tips>

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