

# POISON IVY



Rash/blisters can form after a few days or a week.

## Poison Ivy Facts:

- Grows in vines and small low lying shrubs and has three distinct leaves
- The leaves change color; bright red in the spring, green in the summer, reddish/yellow/orange in the fall
- Urushiol is contained in/on the root, stem, and leaves of the plant
- Urushiol is **EXTREMELY** potent; 1/4 ounce would be enough to give the entire Earth's population a rash
- Urushiol can stay active on clothing/materials for up to 5 years
- Poison Ivy grows everywhere in the US except at extreme altitudes and far western deserts.
- A rash develops after a few days or a week of exposure and can last up to 3 weeks, peaking with blisters



Poison Ivy has three distinct leaflets.

## Common Misconceptions:

- Weeping blisters DO NOT spread a poison ivy rash. Blisters from poison ivy are the same as any other blister and do not contain urushiol
- You **CAN NOT** spread poison ivy from person to person. Urushiol will be absorbed by the skin within 30 minutes of exposure, once the oil is absorbed by the skin it can no longer be passed to another person.

## Preventing Exposure:

- Know the area you are working in, look for poison ivy when working out- doors
- Wear long pants that cover your legs
- Never weed whack or burn poison ivy
- Safely remove any clothes that may have come into contact with poison ivy, keep these separate from other dirty cloths and immediately wash them.
- Companies now market "poison ivy block" which supposedly prevents poison ivy from entering the pores of the skin



Late summer/early fall berries found on poison ivy ripen and turn a pale white color.

## Treating your Skin After Exposure:

- If you know you were exposed within the last HOUR to poison ivy, wash your skin with a poison ivy soap (Technu) and lots of cold water
- After one hour, washing will most likely not prevent a "rash" however, still wash with an abundance of cool water and poison ivy wash to re- move any excess urushiol that may be on the skin
- After a rash has already broken out, wash your body with the hottest water tolerable/safe to help relieve itching for a few hours
- Don't rupture blisters that form, a blister is a natural barrier that forms to keep the damaged skin underneath sanitized.
- There are various cream/ointments that are sold over the counter to help relieve the itching sensation from a poison ivy rash
- If a severe rash breaks out, seek medical attention
- If you think you inhaled smoke from burning poison ivy or had an open cut/sore exposed to poison ivy seek immediate medical attention



FM-OHS:

[fm-ohs@virginia.edu](mailto:fm-ohs@virginia.edu)

(434) 297-6379