



TOWNSHIP OFFICIALS OF ILLINOIS RISK MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

# RISK REMINDER

PARTNERING WITH TOWNSHIPS

## POISON IVY



**Poison Ivy:** This plant has shiny leaves, small yellow/green flowers and green/white berries. It grows as a vine, shrub or bush. It is common throughout the United States, except in some parts of the desert Southwest, Alaska and Hawaii. It is good to remember this simple line when outdoors, "Leaves of three, let them be!"

### SYMPTOMS

Almost always contact with urushiol causes a type of contact dermatitis (inflammation of the upper layers of the skin). Symptoms most commonly occur 8-48 hours after direct contact with the sap.

- Intense itching
- Red rash (may appear at different times, in different locations on the body either because of repeat contact or because some parts of the skin are more sensitive than others)
- Multiple blisters may form several days after a rash (may be tiny or very large, typically appearing in a straight line following the track where the plant brushed along the skin)
- Fever and headache
- The rash associated with infection usually lasts 2-3 weeks. The blister fluid itself will not spread the rash to other parts of an infected person's body, nor can it infect

another person. Blisters should not be popped or drained.

### TREATMENT

Treatments can only help relieve symptoms. There is no way to shorten the duration of the rash associated with contact of urushiol. One of the most effective treatments involves the application of corticosteroids, which can be used on all areas of the skin, except the face and genitals where a lower dose hydrocortisone (1%) should be used in its place.

### PREVENTION

Recognition and avoidance of contact with the plants themselves is the best type of prevention. A number of commercial barrier creams can be applied before exposure to minimize, but not completely prevent, absorption of the oil. The oil can soak through clothing and even latex gloves, so adequate protection is necessary when working or engaging in recreation outdoors. Washing the skin with soap and water can help prevent absorption of the sap, but must be done immediately after contact occurs. It is also the best way to prevent spreading the sap to other areas of the body, or to other persons not infected.

For more information, contact your Loss Control Consultant at (800) 252-5059, ext. 1387 or 1384.

CLAIM REPORTING HOTLINE (844) 562-2720 | Available 24/7