

WORST-CASE SCENARIO®

HOW TO TREAT POISON IVY, POISON OAK, AND POISON SUMAC

1

Wash the exposed area of skin.

Immediately wash the contaminated area with large amounts of running water.

2

Wash shoes, socks, pants, gloves, and clubs immediately.

Urushiol oil, which causes the rash, can stay active on objects for up to a year. Dilute the oil by washing equipment with lots of water. Slop rubbing alcohol over exposed skin (except on the face) and rinse with water. (Carry a jar containing rubbing alcohol and a small cloth.) Rubbing alcohol neutralizes the oil.

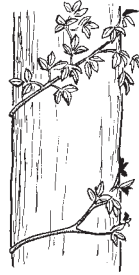
3

Do not scratch the rash.

A rash usually develops a few hours to a few days after exposure. It will start with an itch accompanied by a light rash that continually becomes more intense and eventually blisters. Excessive and continual scratching can lead to neural dermatitis (persistent itch) that can continue even after the reaction has stopped. The total reaction usually lasts two weeks or less. If the itch is intolerable, seek medical assistance.



Poison ivy



Poison oak



Poison sumac



4

To reduce itching, run hot water over the rash or blister area.

Gradually increase the temperature of the water (be careful not to burn yourself). Let the water run hot until you feel bursts of relief from the area, which may take five minutes or more. Hot water helps to release histamines from the skin. This method can relieve itching for eight hours or more. Warm or cold packs and calamine lotion can also reduce itching. Prescription cortisone cream is many times the strength of over-the-counter cortisone cream and can be used for severe itching.

Be Aware

- Poison ivy and oak thrive in disturbed ground, such as land molded and shaped for golf courses; be sure to ask if it is present on the course before beginning your round. Size and appearance of poison ivy and oak varies with habitat. Poison sumac is fairly rare and limited to deep swamps. Its leaflets can be from two to eight inches long, and the plants can be six inches high, or can vine to the top of a 20-foot-tall tree. All three plants contain urushiol.
- Poison ivy and poison oak grow in all areas of the United States except for southwestern deserts and mountain elevations above 4,000 feet.
- Even when leaves are not present, the stems, berries, and roots of the plants still contain the oil and should be avoided.
- To prevent exposure, wear shoes and socks and long pants, not shorts.

- Do not rub other plants or leaves on an affected area to treat or prevent a rash. There are no plant juices known to neutralize urushiol, and juices spread on the body in small quantities are likely to spread the oil and increase the rash.
- Even if you have not previously reacted to poison ivy, oak, or sumac, do not assume you are immune. After the first exposure, and especially after repeated exposures, 85 percent of people will have an allergic reaction.
- A golf ball that rolls through any of these poisonous plants, or that has come to rest among the leaves or vines of the plants, may be contaminated with urushiol oil. Carefully pick up your ball with a towel or while wearing your glove and wash the ball immediately. Wash the towel or glove before using it again.

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