



The New Jersey Poison Information & Education System

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for New Jersey by New Jersey
Department of Health and Senior
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RESS RELEASE

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Leaves of Three, Let Them Be Myths about Poison Ivy

(Newark, NJ)- A 44 year old male developed a red, itchy rash on his lower legs after weeding in the backyard. By the next morning, the rash spread to his entire body (chest, arms, back, hands, and face) causing severe irritation and discomfort.

The warmer months are well known for seasonal allergic contact dermatitis (rash) caused by coming in contact with poisonous plants like poison ivy, oak, and sumac. "Each summer, the NJ Poison Control Center handles dozens of calls to its hotline from residents seeking information on plants in and around their homes. Getting poison ivy is common, unfortunately, so to are the myths about it" said Bruce Ruck, Pharm D. of NJPIES.

Know the facts...

Myth: Poison ivy rash can be given to someone else.

Truth: The skin rash is a reaction to urushiol (the oil from the plant). The rash cannot pass from person to person. Only the oily resin, urushiol can be spread by contact from the plant to skin. If you should get the plant oil on your skin, wash with soap and water to remove the oil and prevent the rash from occurring. Keep in mind that pets can carry the oil from the plant on their fur and can pass the oil to any human coming in contact with them. Don't forget to wash pets roaming in areas that may have poison ivy with soap and water to prevent spreading the oils to humans.

Myth: Scratching poison ivy blisters will spread the rash.

Truth: The fluid in the blisters will *NOT* spread the rash. Avoid scratching of your blisters. Your fingernails carry bacteria that could cause an infection.

Myth: Dead poison ivy plants are no longer "poisonous".

Truth: This is not true. Urushiol can remain active for up to several years. One should never handle dead plants that look like poison ivy, remember, "Leaves of three, let it be". One should wear gloves, long sleeves and pants when working in the garden or when you will be in areas where it grows. Wash clothes, sporting equipment and tools, which have been used outdoors with soap and water.

If you suspect you or a loved one has come into contact with poisonous plants, call the NJ Poison Control Center at 1-800-222-1222 immediately for immediate treatment advice as well as for prevention information.

FREE & CONFIDENTIAL
Call 24 hours a day/ 7 days a week
Multilingual Services Available

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