

POISON IVY

Leaves of three, leave them be!

Poison Ivy - Basics

- Leaves may be smooth or notched on the same plant, 3-5 leaflets per compound leaf
- Allergenic flowering plant contain oleoresins known collectively as urushiol.
- Exposure to urushiol, a skin-irritating oil produced by poison ivy, poison oak, or poison sumac, can trigger hypersensitivity reaction in susceptible individuals. Eyes, airway, and lungs may be involved if exposed to smoke from burning plants.

Symptoms

- Rash: linear, red, possibly edematous, itchy or mildly painful.
- Lesions are secondary to brushing against the plant or excoriations from scratching.
- Lesions appear within 12-48 hours, complete resolution within 7-21 days



Toxicodendron radicans (common poison ivy)
Toxicodendron rydbergii (western or northern poison ivy)

Prehospital management of poison ivy

- Preventive measures: Wear long sleeves, long pants, and gloves. Vinyl gloves are preferred (over leather or fabric gloves) as they do not absorb urushiol as readily. Rubber gloves can be permeable to urushiol.
- Wash the affected area immediately with copious amounts of water. Avoid using soap as it can spread the urushiol oil around the skin. Urushiol penetrates the skin and binds to membrane lipids within 10-20 min. of contact. If the toxin can be removed before this occurs, reaction can be avoided.
- Remove or clean all clothes and objects that might have been in contact with the urushiol oil.
- Topical preparations for symptomatic relief: Calamine (a zinc oxide/ferric oxide), oatmeal baths, Burow solution, or jewelweed mash or soap. Topical corticosteroids may be beneficial if applied before vesicles appear.