

Poison Oak

Symptoms

When the oil from the poison oak plant comes in contact with skin it can create a contact dermatitis. The rash may develop within a few hours or up to seven days. It is characterized by redness, itching/burning and blisters. The rash may be localized or spread over large areas of the body. Sensitivity to poison oak varies markedly among people, even in different periods of the same person's life. The rash is usually at its worst after 5 days and gradually improves within a week or two. The rash *does not* spread from one part of the skin to another, from person to person or by the fluid in the blisters. It is *only* spread from contact of the oil. You *can* get a reaction from contact with the oil on clothes that have not been washed or touching animals that have the oil on their fur.

Treatment

Wash affected areas and scrub under fingernails to remove any traces of oil. Wash all clothing to prevent further contact. Calamine lotion, cortisone cream or Dermapax may be applied to help with the itching. Intermittent external cool, wet skin compresses of Burrow's solution (Domeboro, BurVeen or Aveeno bath) can also be applied and will speed drying of oozing rash and help prevent secondary infection. Oral Benadryl can help control the itching but can also make you drowsy. Non medication treatment include: baking soda solution, vitamin E or Tea Tree oil. (Can be purchased at a health food store.)

See Your Doctor

See your doctor if the rash involves the eyes, mouth, or genital or you develop a severe reaction characterized by fever or feel generally ill.

Prevention

- Learn to recognize the plant during all seasons and avoid it!
- When there is a possibility of exposure, wear a long sleeve shirt and pants.
- Wash self and clothes immediately upon exposure.
- Don't scratch.
- Be aware of your animals that may be in contact with the plant and carry the oil on their fur.
- Do not try to get rid of plants by burning them. The oils can be transferred in the smoke.