

Health & Wellness Newsletter September 2021



Poison ivy, poison oak, and poison sumac are plants that contain an irritating, oily sap called *urushiol*.

Urushiol is found in all parts of these plants, including the leaves, stems, and roots, and is even present after the plant has died.

Urushiol is absorbed quickly and triggers an allergic reaction when it comes into contact with the skin.

Depending on your skin's sensitivity, a rash may develop within a few hours or days after initial contact. Symptoms include:

- Blisters.
- Itchy skin rash.
- Redness and swelling



Treat the rash:

- Immediately rinse your skin with lukewarm, soapy water.
- Wash your clothing.
- Wash everything that may have the oil on its surface.
- Do not scratch, as scratching can cause an infection.
- Leave blisters alone.

Poison ivy, poison oak, and poison sumac are three of the most common causes of allergic contact dermatitis in North America.

Relieve the itch:

- Take short, lukewarm baths or cool showers.
- Use calamine lotion or hydrocortisone cream.
- Apply cool compresses to the itchy skin.
- Consider taking antihistamine pills, like an allergy pill or Benadryl.

If your rash is not improving after 7 to 10 days, or you think your rash may be infected, see your doctor.



Top Facts

- ⤴ **Poison Ivy, Poison Oak, and Poison Sumac share the same family as Mangoes, Cashews, and Pistachios.**
- ⤴ **Poison Sumac can be taller than you.**
- ⤴ **There are 9 million office visits and 1.6 million hospital outpatient visits for contact dermatitis in the U.S. every year.**
- ⤴ **Dead plants are still a viable threat.**
- ⤴ **Poison ivy, poison oak, and poison sumac have been known to inhabit every state in the U.S. with the exception of Alaska and Hawaii.**

Sources: <https://www.webmd.com/allergies/poison-ivy-oak-sumac>
<https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/articles/10655-poison-plants-poison-ivy--poison-oak--poison-sumac>
<https://www.aad.org/public/everyday-care/itchy-skin/poison-ivy/treat-rash>