



## **POISON IVY**

### **What is poison ivy?**

- Poison ivy is a plant found in most parts of the United States that causes a skin reaction. It is not a disease.

### **What symptoms occur?**

- Red, bumpy skin rash, which usually will progress into itchy blisters that ooze, harden, and then crack
- Eruption on exposed body surfaces (e.g. hands)
- Shaped like streaks or patches
- Extreme itchiness
- Onset of rash may appear as early as a few hours or as late as 2 weeks after the exposure

### **How is it spread?**

- The fluid from the sores themselves does not spread poison ivy. However, anything that has poison ivy oil or sap on it can spread poison ivy for about 1 week.
- This includes the shoes and clothes the patient last wore into the woods, as well as any pets that may have oil on their fur
- Be sure to wash them off with soap and water. The rash begins 1 to 2 days after skin contact

### **How is it diagnosed and treated?**

- Consult by primary care provider evaluation
- Over the counter treatments are available

### **Can poison ivy be prevented?**

- Learn to recognize poison ivy
- Avoid all plants with three large shiny, green leaves. Another clue is the presence of shiny black spots on damaged leaves. (The sap of the plant turns black when exposed to air.)
- Wear long pants and socks when walking through woods that may contain poison ivy
- Avoid scratching.
- Cut fingernails short.

### **Is it contagious?**

- If you think your child has had contact with poison ivy, wash the exposed areas of skin with any available soap for 5 minutes
- Strong laundry soap has no added benefits. Wash within 1 hour, if possible. Washing after 1 hour is of little value in preventing absorption of oil.

### **When can the child return to day care or school?**

- Following recommendations of physician

### **Should schools do special cleaning?**

- Special cleaning is not necessary. Routine cleaning with EPA approved products is recommended.

Genesee County Health Department  
630 S. Saginaw Street  
Flint, Michigan 48502  
[www.gchd.us](http://www.gchd.us)

**If I have any other questions, whom can I contact?**

- Call the Genesee County Health Department at 257-3612

This fact sheet is for information only and is not meant to be used for self diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care provider. For more information, call your health care provider.

5/27/2004