



# MAFES Dawg Tracks

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*Safety Tips: Protection from Poisonous Plants*



Poison Oak, poison Ivy, and poison sumac, I feel the itch just mentioning their names. I would imagine that most of the folks who read this newsletter have experienced one or the other of these dreaded allergies. 85% of Americans are allergic to these plants, which means that there is only 15% that are resistant to the plant.

If you are allergic to poison ivy, you're probably allergic to the other two. All three plants contain the same rash-triggering plant oil called urushiol. According to the researchers, if you are allergic to the poison ivy, oak or sumac, you are probably allergic to other varieties of plant resins like the Japanese lacquer tree, which is used on furniture, mango rinds, and cashew shells.

## CAUSES OF POISON IVY, OAK AND SUMAC RASHES-

- ✓ Touching the leaves, roots or stems, even if you don't realize that you did touch them.
- ✓ The urushiol penetrates the skin leaving red streaks where you brushed up against one of the three.
- ✓ Symptoms of one of the three will usually show up within 24 to 72 hours.
- ✓ Scratching the rash won't cause it to spread (as we were told as kids), but it can prolong the healing and can cause a secondary infection.
- ✓ The rash isn't contagious, so you can't pass it on to a school friend or other people.

## TYPES OF TRANSMISSIONS THAT CAN OCCUR-

- Direct contact with the plant
- Indirect contact when you touch pets, gardening tools, or sports equipment that had direct contact with the plant.
- Airborne contact from burning these plants, which releases particles of the urushiol plant. These will penetrate the skin, eyes, nose, throat and your respiratory system.

## SYMPTOMS OF AN ALLERGIC REACTION-

- Red streaks or patches
- Itching
- Rash
- Swelling
- Blisters that can leak and crust over later
- Inflammation and a burning sensation

## TREATMENT OF POISON IVY, SUMAC ALLERGIES- Self-care for a mild rash:

- Wash the area with mild soap and lukewarm water as quickly as possible after contact.
- Wash all of your clothes, socks, shoes and tools that may have been contaminated.
- Cool compresses may help during the blistering stage.
- Use a prescription strength topical corticosteroid cream for the rash as directed by a doctor.
- Try calamine lotion for the itching, but stay away from skin products that contain anesthetics or antihistamines, as they can start their own allergic reaction.
- To help ease the itching, take cool showers and mix baking soda and water and applying to the area.
- If sleeping is a problem because of itching, purchase an over-the-counter antihistamine to use at night.

## Call your doctor or a dermatologist for:

- Severe blistering, swelling, and itching
- Symptoms that persist in sensitive areas, like the eyes, lips, throat, or genitals
- Fever
- A rash over large areas of your body
- A rash lasting longer than two weeks
- Blisters that become infected with pus

**If you have difficulty breathing or severe coughing after being exposed to burning plants- Get immediate help!**

## TIPS FOR PREVENTION OF THE RASHES FROM POISON IVY, OAK, OR SUMAC-

There is an old saying: "Leaflets three-let them be." Poison ivy and poison oak have a triple-leaf structure that you can learn to recognize- especially if you have had the rash before.

- Avoid any contact with these plants, if at all humanly possible.
- When working in the woods, hiking or camping, looking for your golf ball in heavy rough, have your body covered as much as possible.
- Remember you can also contact the rash from tools, clothes or pets that have the urushiol on them.
- If you work outside where you are at risk for constant exposure, ask your doctor about over-the-counter products, such as bentoquatam that will help protect your skin from exposure.

**AT WORK OR PLAY-  
~WATCH~  
TO KEEP THE  
POISON PLANTS AWAY!!**