

# Poison Ivy, Oak, & Sumac

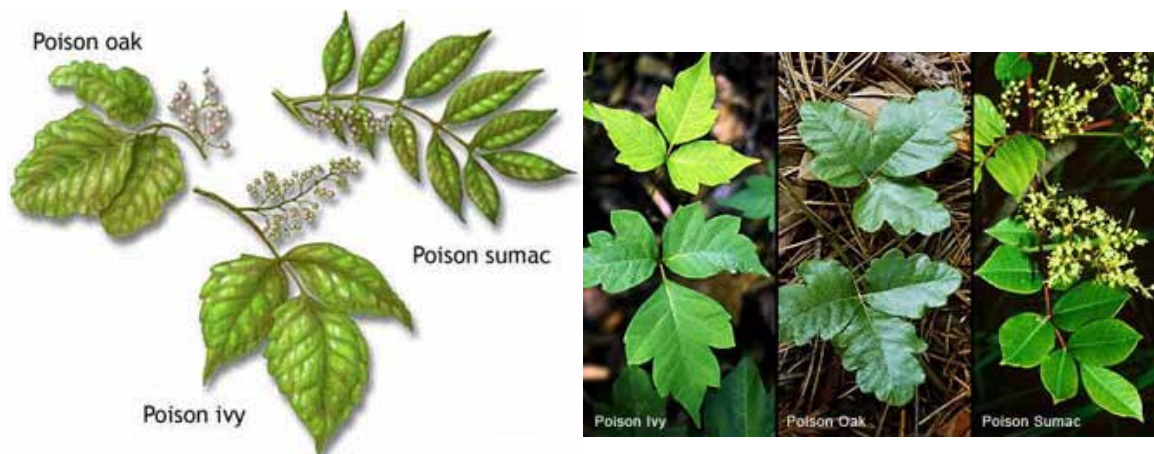
Coming into contact with poison ivy, oak or sumac can put a real damper on summer fun. No one wants to spend days or weeks dealing with an itchy painful rash when they could be enjoying the gorgeous summer weather.

The rash that many people develop from these plants is caused by an oil that the plants release called urushiol. When this oil gets on the skin it causes an allergic reaction known as allergic contact dermatitis. Symptoms at the site of contact may include a rash with itching, redness, hives, and blisters that may leak fluid. The rash usually does not appear until 12 to 72 hours after you come into contact with the plant's oil, and the reaction may last for several weeks.

The rash itself is not contagious, but oil from the plants may be transferred onto your skin by touching anything that has come in contact with these plants, such as clothing, sporting gear, gardening tools, or pet fur.

Your child should see a doctor if the rash covers a large part of their body, they have large blisters, or cannot sleep. If your child has trouble breathing or swallowing, go to an emergency room or call 911 immediately.

## Do you know how to identify poison ivy, oak, and sumac?



# Poison Ivy, Oak, & Sumac

Look at the photos on the previous page to help you recognize which plants to avoid. “Leaves of three, Let it be!” is a helpful reminder for identifying poison ivy and oak, but not poison sumac which usually has clusters of 7-13 leaves. Even poison ivy and poison oak may have more than three leaves and their form may vary greatly depending upon the exact species encountered, the local environment, and the season.

## **How to avoid poison ivy, oak or sumac**

When you can't avoid contact with the plants, try these tips:

- Wear long pants, long sleeves, and closed shoes to help keep the oil from getting on your skin.
- Wear vinyl or leather gloves. Rubber (latex), cotton, or wool gloves do not offer enough protection.
- Use a barrier cream or lotion that contains bentoquatam. It can help keep the oil from coming in contact with your skin.
- Wash well or throw away anything that came into contact with the plants.
- If you think your child has come into contact with these plants, have them wash their skin immediately with plenty of water and mild soap. They might be able to avoid the rash, especially if they wash well within 10 to 15 minutes of contact.

## **Home remedies for poison ivy, oak, or sumac**

- Apply over-the-counter topical treatment, such as calamine lotion
- Take lukewarm oatmeal baths
- Don't scratch the rash. Scratching could cause a skin infection
- Apply a cool compress, wet cloth, or soak the area in cool water