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Monthly Safety Blast

Produced by the Southwest Center for Agricultural Health, Injury Prevention and Education

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Leaves of Three

It's a jungle out there! Everything is lush and green thanks to frequent summer showers. Whether you are in the field clearing brush or working on a logging site, you need to be aware of the plants that can leave a lasting (and itchy) impression on you. Most people have heard the old saying, "Leaves of three, let it be." Before you have to learn the meaning of that proverb the hard way, let's discuss the Poison Ivy plant.

How can I recognize Poison Ivy?

The Poison Ivy plant has three leaves on each stem. It can grow on the ground, climb surfaces like trees, and can be found as a shrub. In the summer, the leaves are a glossy green but soon turn to pink and orange in the fall months. The leaves will have deep notches that could resemble an oak leaf.



What happens if I touch Poison Ivy?

When you come into contact with Poison Ivy, the plant oil is absorbed through the skin. In order to stop the oil from being absorbed, wash the infected area with cold water using high pressure and apply rubbing alcohol after rinsing. Do not use soap or hot water because the oil will spread and absorb at a faster rate.

What happens if I develop a rash?

Poison Ivy can cause rashes if the plant oil is not removed thoroughly. A minor rash can be treated with over the counter medications, such as Zanafel or Cortizone-10. If blisters or tenderness develops, seek medical attention for a prescribed treatment. You can help ease the itching sensation by applying hot water to the rash or anti-itch cream.

How long will the rash last?

The length of a rash will depend on the exposure amount and the sensitivity of the skin. On average, a Poison Ivy rash will last 2-3 weeks.



Is Poison Ivy rash contagious?

Once the plant oil has been absorbed, the rash cannot be spread. If the infected person has properly cleaned the exposed surfaces such as clothing or sinks, then the plant oil cannot be dispersed.



Can you recognize Poison Ivy?

Take the quiz! <http://www.poison-ivy.org/poison-ivy-quiz>

References:

- <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/earthkind/landscape/poisonous-plants-resources/common-poisonous-plants-and-plant-parts/>
- <http://www.poison-ivy.org/poison-ivy-shrub>

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