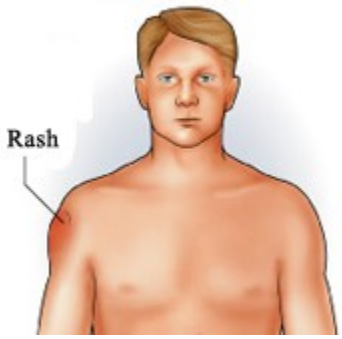
Allergic Contact Dermatitis

Allergic contact dermatitis is an itchy, red and scaly rash. It is caused by an allergic reaction to certain substances that touch your skin. The rash often times appears within one to three days after contact.

CAUSES



- Poison oak.
- Poison ivy.
- Chemicals (deodorants, shampoos).
- Jewelry.
- Latex.
- Neomycin in triple antibiotic cream.

SYMPTOMS

- In poison ivy or oak, a very itchy rash with tiny blisters may appear. This comes 1-2 days after exposure.
- The skin may also appear to be dry with flaking.
- There can be marked swelling in some areas such as the eyelids, mouth or genitals.

TREATMENT

It is most important to avoid all contact with the allergic substances. Additional treatment of allergic dermatitis may include:

- Burrow's solution soaks to help dry the oozing sores.
- Cortisone creams or ointments applied 3-4 times daily. For best results, soak rash area in cool water for 20 minutes. Then apply the medicine. Cover the area with a plastic wrap. You can store the cortisone cream in the refrigerator for a "chilly" effect on your rash. That may decrease itching.
- Injections or oral cortisone medicines are needed in more severe cases.
- Antihistamine medicine helps ease the itching.
- A cool bath can also help stop itching. Try not to scratch the rash.
- Medicines that kill germs (*antibiotics*) may be needed if there is a skin infection present.

DIAGNOSIS

In cases where the cause is uncertain, patch skin tests may be performed to help confirm the identity of the source.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Use medications as directed.
- Keep the affected area away from anything that would irritate your skin.
- If you have poison oak or ivy, the clothing you were wearing at the time of contact should be washed or cleaned. This will get rid of the substance (*resin*) that caused the allergic reaction.
- If you have a pet, the resins may also be present in their fur. They also need washing with soap and water.
- You may also prevent poison oak or ivy by washing exposed skin with soap and water as soon as possible after contact.
- As with poison ivy, avoid contact with these plants. Wear protective clothing and gloves when you must be in contact. A barrier cream such as Ivy Block or Shield before exposure will help an outbreak if you bathe within 8 hours of contact.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- Your condition is not better after 3 days of treatment or you seem to keep getting worse.
- You see signs of infection, such as swelling, tenderness, redness or soreness (*inflammation*), or warmth of

affected area.

- You have any problems related to medication used.

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