Poison Ivy
(Toxicodendron Dermatitis)

Poison ivy is a inflammation of the skin (*contact dermatitis*) caused by touching the allergens on the leaves of the ivy plant following previous exposure to the plant. The rash usually appears 48 hours after exposure. The rash is usually bumps (*papules*) or blisters (*vesicles*) in a linear pattern. Depending on your own sensitivity, the rash may simply cause redness and itching, or it may also progress to blisters which may break open. These must be well cared for to prevent secondary bacterial (germ) infection, followed by scarring. Keep any open areas dry, clean, dressed, and covered with an antibacterial ointment if needed. The eyes may also get puffy. The puffiness is worst in the morning and gets better as the day progresses. This dermatitis usually heals without scarring, within 2 to 3 weeks without treatment.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

Thoroughly wash with soap and water as soon as you have been exposed to poison ivy. You have about one half hour to remove the plant resin before it will cause the rash. This washing will destroy the oil or antigen on the skin that is causing, or will cause, the rash. Be sure to wash under your fingernails as any plant resin there will continue to spread the rash. Do not rub skin vigorously when washing affected area. Poison ivy cannot spread if no oil from the plant remains on your body. A rash that has progressed to weeping sores will not spread the rash unless you have not washed thoroughly. It is also important to wash any clothes you have been wearing as these may carry active allergens. The rash will return if you wear the unwashed clothing, even several days later.

Avoidance of the plant in the future is the best measure. Poison ivy plant can be recognized by the number of leaves. Generally, poison ivy has three leaves with flowering branches on a single stem.

Diphenhydramine may be purchased over the counter and used as needed for itching. **Do not drive with this medication if it makes you drowsy.** Ask your caregiver about medication for children.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF

- Open sores develop.
- Redness spreads beyond area of rash.
- You notice purulent (pus-like) discharge.
- You have increased pain.
- Other signs of infection develop (such as fever).

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