



## Leaves of Three Let Them Be

As the seasons change so do the types of calls coming into the Nebraska Regional Poison Center. This is a good time to review a common summertime poison.

Poison ivy, poison oak and poison sumac can release a substance called urushiol when the leaves or other parts of the plant are damaged or burned. Almost 85% of people exposed to the oil will have an allergic reaction and it only takes a very small amount of oil to cause a reaction. Typically there will be an itchy, red rash with bumps and blisters.

Poison ivy isn't contagious unless you spread the oil from person to person. But keep in mind that pets can carry the oil from the plant on their fur and pass the oil to any human coming in contact with them. Garden tools and sporting equipment should always be rinsed off. The urushiol can linger for years on a surface if it isn't washed off with water.

The poison ivy rash doesn't spread to other parts of the body unless you haven't washed properly and have the oil still on your hands or under your fingernails.

### Tips on Poison Ivy

- Recognize what poison ivy looks like: "Leaves of three let them be" or "1, 2, 3 let it be" are catchy phrases to help you remember.
- Wash your hands with soap and cool water as soon as possible if you come in contact with poison ivy.
- Wear long sleeves and pants and impermeable gloves when working in areas you think may have poison ivy.
- Wash any exposed clothing immediately.
- Wash garden tools and gloves often.
- Don't scratch your rash as it can cause an infection.
- Lukewarm baths with a colloidal oatmeal preparation may help relieve the itching.
- Applying cool compresses, calamine lotion, or hydrocortisone cream may also help to relieve the itchy skin.
- Contact the poison center at 1-800-222-1222 if you have any questions.