

Poison Ivy and Children

Summer camps and family hiking sessions can sometimes result in children getting itchy rashes. To be blamed are plants such as poison ivy, poison sumac and poison oak. All of them produce the same substance or oil, called urushiol, which cause rashes. Urushiol is colorless and even odorless and is present within the leaves. Poison ivy can even grow in the backyards and parks. So any kind of outdoor activity should be monitored and the lawn should be de-weeded periodically. Bushes should be checked, as they grow as a regular plant and the child would not be able to distinguish the poisonous plant from the regular one.

Precaution is better than cure. Children should be educated and made to understand the description and ill-effects of poison ivy. They come in wide range and some change the appearance depending on seasonal variations. Urushiol is released from the leaves only when the leaves are damaged like when they are torn, get bumped or are brushed. The moment the leave is damaged, urushiol is released and the skin is affected immediately. Also, what many people do not know that to get a rash by poison ivy is not only by coming directly in contact with the plant. Human and animal carriers of urushiol can affect people coming in contact with them. The leaves of the plant can be flown by the air, which can cause damage when those leaves are handled or burned with the rest of the leaves and twigs.

Once the children are made familiar with the plants, they should be asked to steer clear on the sight of the plant or leaves. Parents should avoid places where there are possibilities of growth of such plants. When going on camps, etc., children should not be dressed in short sleeves and short length pants, so that the body does not brush off such plants. In spite of taking all these precautions, if the child comes in contact with such plants and contact with urushiol is suspected, the area should be washed with water and disinfectant. It is best to take shower and clean the whole body and the clothes should be removed immediately and washed. Pets should also be bathed after their outdoor adventures.

Basically, the urushiol causes an allergic reaction which irritates the skin and that is the reason why it is known as an allergen. This allergen won't harm all, but eighty percent of the victims get skin irritations. It not only creates itchy rashes, but can also swell the skin. The time period for the symptoms to surface is few hours to five days. The rash usually takes one to two week to heal completely. First the skin swells and rash develops. Blisters can also form as a result of regular rubbing of the skin to get rid of the itch. The blisters will form a crust after some days and will flake off.

If the rashes are accompanied with fever, a pediatrician should be contacted for

appointment. And if the case isn't that serious, the doctor recommends home remedies. The child would be asked to be given showers with cold water and calamine lotion would have to be applied. If the redness and itching is intense, fluid medicine along with pills are administered to the kid. Antihistamine is very popular in such cases. Steroids are prescribed by the doctor.

PPPPP

Word Count 565