

## Summertime Skin Irritants

Warm weather is here and it's time for outdoor activities. Whether it's working in the yard or garden or going hiking or camping, it's important to become aware of certain plants that can cause seasonal, allergic rashes (contact dermatitis). Approximately 85 percent of the population will develop an allergic reaction if exposed to poison ivy, oak, or sumac, according to the American Academy of Dermatology.

These poisonous plants contain an oily ingredient (urushiol) found in the sap of all species of poison ivy, oak, and sumac. This oily ingredient is found in the leaves, stems, roots, and berries of all of these plants. Contact with this oil may cause allergic reactions that include redness, bumps, blisters, itching, and swelling.



### Exposure can occur in these ways:

- ◆ **Direct contact** – touching the sap of the toxic plant.
- ◆ **Indirect contact** – touching something on which urushiol is present. The oil can stick to the fur of dogs or cats, to garden tools, sports equipment, or to any objects that have come into contact with it, including mulch.
- ◆ **Airborne contact** – burning poisonous plants send urushiol particles into the air.

**If you think you've come in contact with poison ivy, oak, or sumac, follow these simple steps:**

- ◆ Wash all exposed areas with soap and cold running water.
- ◆ Wash your clothing in a washing machine with detergent.
- ◆ Relieve the itching of mild rashes by taking cool showers and applying over-the-counter lotions or creams.

### To prevent getting poison ivy, oak, or sumac:

- ◆ Learn to recognize poison ivy, oak, or sumac.
- ◆ For more information and pictures of these poisonous plants, visit the National Park Service at [http://www.nps.gov/public\\_health/inter/info/factsheets/fs\\_pivy.htm](http://www.nps.gov/public_health/inter/info/factsheets/fs_pivy.htm).
- ◆ Wear gloves, long sleeves, and pants when working in the garden or when you'll be in areas where it grows.
- ◆ Wash clothes, sporting equipment, and tools that have been used outdoors with soap and water. Handle carefully.
- ◆ Never attempt to destroy poisonous plants or shrubs in your backyard by burning them. Inhalation of the smoke produced by the burning of these plants can cause a life-threatening reaction.

Source: The New Jersey Poison Information and Education System, [www.njpies.org](http://www.njpies.org) or 1-800-222-1222

## Ride Safely on Motorcycles

Since the air is warmer and gas prices higher, more motorcyclists will hit the road. However, highway crashes continue to claim the lives of thousands of motorcyclists. That's why it's important for both new and seasoned riders to hone their skills. **The Motorcycle Safety Foundation offers this advice:**

- ▲ Take a training class every year. Be a lifelong learner.
- ▲ Gear up. Wear real motorcycling protective safety apparel and a helmet manufactured to standards set by the Department of Transportation.
- ▲ Ride straight. Never use alcohol or drugs when riding. Motorcycle riders in fatal crashes have higher intoxication rates than drivers in any other type of vehicle.
- ▲ Ride within your limits. Don't ride faster or longer than your bike or your abilities allow.
- ▲ Be certain that you're controlling your bike. Many motorcycle crashes don't involve another vehicle.
- ▲ Keep weather conditions in mind. Riding in a rainstorm is dangerous. Riding with lightning can be fatal.
- ▲ Whether you're on a motorcycle or in another type of vehicle, always respect each other's right of way.

Source: Motorcycle Safety Foundation, [www.msf-usa.org](http://www.msf-usa.org)

## Avoid Falling Asleep Behind the Wheel

• Watch for the warning signs of fatigue – difficulty focusing, frequent blinking, daydreaming, trouble remembering the last few miles driven, missing exits or traffic signs, yawning repeatedly, trouble keeping your head up, or drifting from your lane. • Stop driving if you have these symptoms. Pull off at the next exit or rest area, and find a safe place to sleep. • Remember that while caffeine may offer short-term alertness, a nap is the best solution.

Source: National Sleep Foundation, [www.sleepfoundation.org](http://www.sleepfoundation.org)

## Be Safe with Fireworks

• Follow all warnings and instructions listed on the fireworks. • Never allow children to use fireworks without adult supervision. • Make sure spectators are out of the range of the fireworks before lighting them. • Light fireworks on a smooth, flat surface away from houses, dry leaves, and flammable materials. • Never try to relight a firework that has malfunctioned. • Keep a bucket of water or water hose nearby in case of fire danger. • Purchase fireworks from reliable vendors. • Obey rules in your area concerning fireworks.



Source: National Council on Fireworks Safety, [www.fireworksafety.com](http://www.fireworksafety.com)