

## POISON CONTROL

### It's poison ivy season. Be prepared with these first-aid kit essentials

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If you've ever gone hiking or camping, you've probably heard the warning, "leaves of three, let them be." But what if you have an accidental brush with poison ivy? A chemical in the sap of the plant called urushiol rubs off on the skin. It's a delayed reaction—12–72 hours later, itching, redness, bumps, and even blistering begin to appear, and last for up to three weeks.

There are many ways to treat poison ivy naturally. "An Epsom salt or sea salt bath is very effective, as well as aloe vera," says John Salerno, MD, director of The Salerno Center in New York City.

Poison ivy causes a histamine reaction in the body, so natural antihistamines taken internally can also help. "I encourage my patients to take an oral treatment which contains nettle and quercetin. These are strong antihistamines and very effective." Specially formulated homeopathic remedies may also ease symptoms.

How to stop the itching and swelling from a case of poison ivy? Aloe vera gel is a tried-and-tested remedy for sunburn and other types of skin irritation, including itching from insect bites and rashes from poison ivy. Gently washing irritated skin with chamomile tea, brewed and then cooled, is another soothing treatment. "Aloe vera has natural anti-inflammatory properties, as does tea tree oil," says Salerno. "Both are very effective for poison ivy relief. Apple cider vinegar, comfrey liquid extract, and burdock root liquid extract applied via compress are great for itch relief," he adds.

