



Tell Me Why

WHY?

Poison Ivy Makes Me Itch



Jennifer Colby



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Table of Contents

Playing in the Backyard	4
A Trip to the Dermatologist	10
Treating Poison Ivy	14
Avoiding Poison Ivy	18
Think About It!	22
Glossary	23
Find Out More	23
Index	24
About the Author	24

Playing in the Backyard

Evan and his best friend, Jake, were playing softball in his backyard. Evan swung his bat and missed. The ball rolled into the bushes.

“I see it!” Evan called. He reached his bare arm through the branches and weeds to get the ball. He tossed the ball back to Jake.

Evan and Jake don't know it yet. But they were just **exposed** to poison ivy.



Poison ivy usually grows in natural areas. But it can also grow in your own backyard.

Poison ivy grows throughout the United States. It can grow as a shrub in the northern states. It can grow as a vine in the East, Midwest, and South. In the spring, it sprouts yellow-green flowers. Sometimes it has green berries that turn off-white in the early fall.

One thing stays the same. Poison ivy always grows with three small **leaflets** on one stem.



LOOK!

Ask an adult to help you find photos of poison ivy online. Knowing what it looks like helps you to avoid it.



Poison ivy has three small green leaflets on one stem. Remember this saying: "Leaves of three, let it be."

The next morning, Evan woke up with red bumps all over his arm. “Mom!” he cried. “My arm is really itchy.”

Evan’s mom looked at his skin and frowned. “Oh honey! I think you have a **rash** from poison ivy.”

She made an appointment for him to see the **dermatologist**.



ASK QUESTIONS!

Most people are allergic to poison ivy, which means they will have an unpleasant physical reaction. Ask your friends and family if they are allergic.



The itchy rash from poison ivy does not happen right away. It starts 12 to 72 hours after touching the plant.

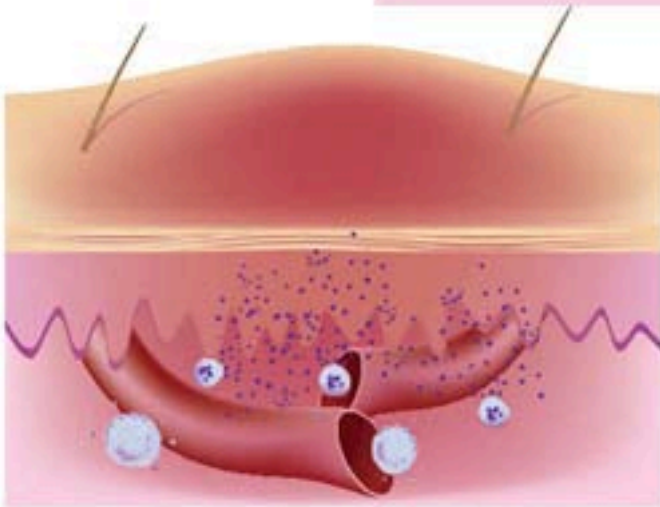
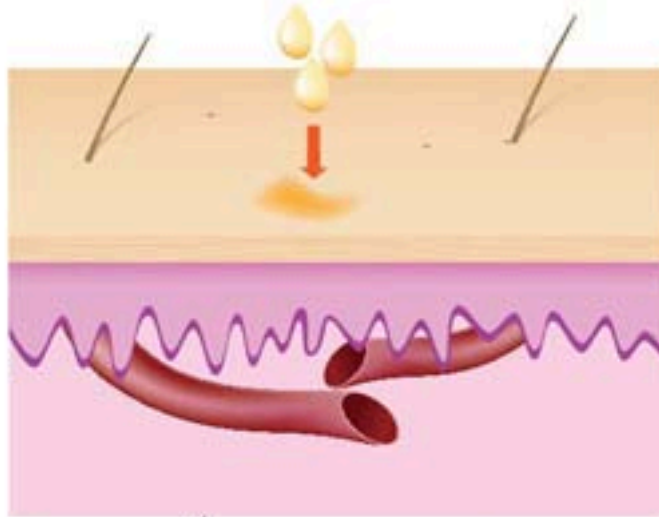
A Trip to the Dermatologist

“That’s a rash from poison ivy,” the dermatologist agreed. “Like most people, you’re allergic to the oil of the plant.”

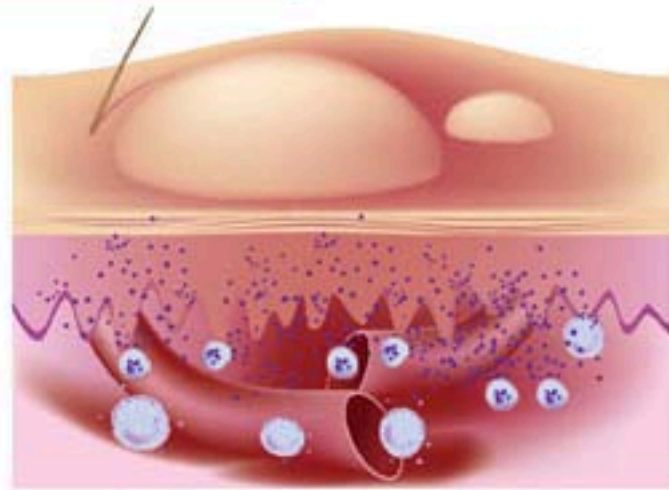
All parts of a poison ivy plant contain an oil called **urushiol**. When skin comes in contact with the oil, a rash can develop.

You can get the rash from anything that comes in contact with the oil. But without the oil, the rash itself is not **contagious**.

Urushiol oil



Mild



Severe

*Urushiol can cause your cells to release a compound.
This produces a rash.*

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