



California Poison Control Warns Residents that Poison Oak is Abundant Now

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(<http://www.calpoison.org>) reminds California residents that with warm weather expected through the fall, poison oak remains a serious threat especially to those who are allergic to the plant. Poison oak (*Toxicodendron diversilobum*) is found mainly in the western regions of the state growing from sea level to the mountains. Grassy hillsides, forests, recreation areas and coastal locations are home to the plant.

Identifiable by its climbing vine-like appearance, the University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources describes poison oak as forming a dense, leafy shrub from one to six feet high. Leaves normally consist of three leaflets with the stalk of the central leaflet being longer than those of the other two and it has either glossy or dull leaves.

“In addition to coming in contact with the plant itself, you can contract poison oak by touching clothing, shoes, gloves, pets and tools. Even smoke from burning plants can cause irritation,” says Dr. Stuart E. Heard, executive director of CPCS. He added exposure in allergic individuals will result in a rash about one to six days that itches and then forms water blisters. The serum from these blisters does not transmit poison oak as many assume. Repeated exposure does, unfortunately, increase sensitivity. Poison oak tips include:

- Wear boots, gloves and long pants when hiking.
- Stay on trails away from brush where poison oak plants grow.
- If you are exposed to poison oak, wash the area thoroughly with lukewarm water and apply rubbing alcohol which may wash away the oil from the plant.
- Wash all clothing, tools and pets that have been exposed to the plant.
- Calamine lotion or hydrocortisone cream can help stop the itching, as can antihistamines.
- Do not scratch the rash as that can cause infection.
- Get immediate medical attention if you have trouble breathing or swallowing; the rash covers much of your body; you have many blisters; or swelling occurs, especially of the eyelids, face or genitals.

About CPCS

Follow CPCS on Facebook at <http://on.fb.me/iS6S7J> and on Twitter @poisoninfo. Sign up for free weekly safety text messages texting TIPS or PUNTOS for Spanish to 69866; and download a free app at [Choose Your Poison](#). In case of an accidental poisoning, consumers should immediately call 1-800-222-1222. Poison information experts are available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to help. In most cases, a poison exposure can be safely managed in your home, avoiding a call to 911 or a visit to a crowded hospital emergency room.

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