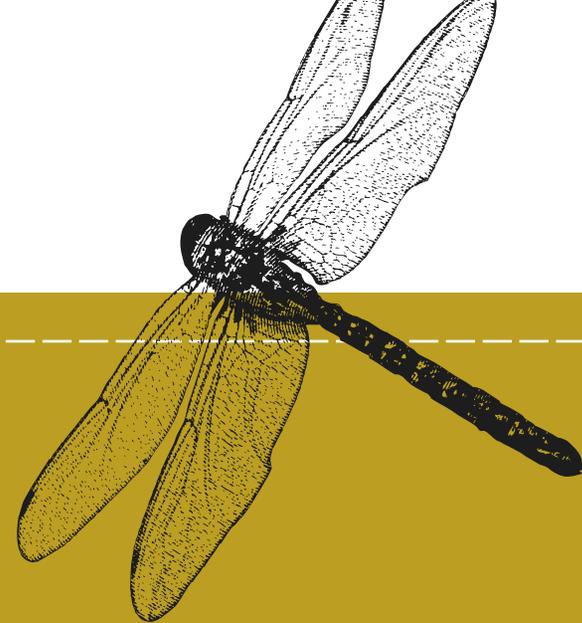




Summer Insect and Rash Survival Guide



Summer is full of promises of relaxation and good times. But with the barbecues, theme parks, and vacations come natural annoyances and all the irritations they bring.

Here, we've created a guide to help you navigate through the stings, bites, and rashes that can ruin a good time. Enjoy the outdoors—don't fear it.

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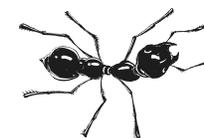
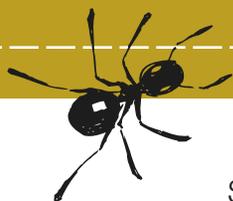
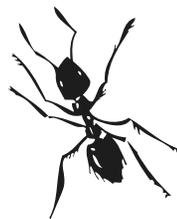
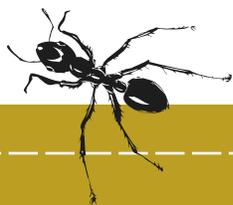
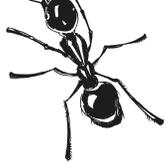


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Insects

Wasps, honeybees, and yellow jackets are some of the more notorious stinging pests, resulting in approximately 100 deaths each year. Also watch out for mosquitoes, horseflies, spiders, and ticks, which aren't as dangerous but can also cause distress. The following guide will help you recognize, treat, and prevent stings and bites from the summer's multi-legged pests.

Summer Insect and Rash Survival Guide



Scenario: You've been bitten by a mosquito or horsefly

SYMPTOMS:

The most common reaction to a mosquito or horsefly bite is swelling, redness, and itching in the affected area. However, some mosquitoes may carry the West Nile virus or other microorganisms. Mild infections can result in fever, headache, and rash where the bite occurred. In rare but severe cases, disorientation, neck stiffness, and sleepiness can occur. The death rates from West Nile range from 3 to 15 percent, depending on the person's age and overall health.

SURVIVAL TIP

Because mosquitoes and horseflies lay eggs in or around bodies of water, try to keep your property free of standing water. If you have a swimming pool, keep it covered when it's not in use and use a pump to keep the water flowing. When going outside for an extended period of time, try to wear long sleeves and pants. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends using insect repellents containing 50 percent of the chemical DEET. If you've been bit, try not to scratch, as it can lead to scarring or an infection. Instead, use an antihistamine cream to relieve the itch.

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Scenario: You've been stung by a honeybee, wasp, or yellow jacket

SYMPTOMS:

A bee sting usually causes minor burning sensations, swelling, and itching. However, for those who are allergic, a sting can be life threatening. It can cause anaphylactic shock—difficulty breathing, drop in blood pressure, and wheezing. Another sign of an allergic reaction is swelling, particularly if it moves to the neck or face.

SURVIVAL TIP

Most stings occur because the bee is protecting the hive. So, for the most part, Mom was right when she said, "If you don't bother the bee, it won't bother you." However, stings aren't always avoidable. Start by staying away from hives, and call pest control if one has been built on or near your home. If you are stung, wash the area with soap and water, remove the stinger with a gauze pad, and apply a cold compress. If the person who is stung is allergic, immediately administer an epinephrine injection and consult a doctor.

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Scenario: You've been bitten by a tick or have found a tick attached to your skin

SYMPTOMS:

Tick bites are painless, and you may not even realize you've been bitten until you find a tick attached to your skin. This means the tick has probably sunk its pinchers into you. Ticks can transmit diseases such as Lyme disease and Rocky Mountain spotted fever. Look for symptoms such as weakness, confusion, rashes, pain and/or swelling in joints, fever, nausea, or other flu-like symptoms.

SURVIVAL TIP

To avoid ticks, wear long-sleeve shirts, long pants, and a hat when camping, hiking, or hunting. Insect repellents can work against ticks, but it is best to cover up.

If you find a tick on your body, follow these steps to remove it.

- Using tweezers, gently turn the tick over onto its back. Then grasp the tick as close to the skin as possible. Pull gently until the tick lets go.
- Do not crush the tick after removal. Smashing it may transmit diseases it's carrying. Flush it down the toilet, or preserve it in a jar in case you need it to determine how or why an illness occurred.
- If the head or pinchers are still embedded, have a doctor remove them. Otherwise, cleanse the area with soap and warm water.

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Scenario: You've been bitten by a spider

SYMPTOMS:

Like bee stings, spider bites usually cause nothing more than an irritation. Only a few spiders found in the United States, including the brown recluse and black widow, can be dangerous. The bite of the brown recluse is usually painless and will heal itself in a few days. However, on rare occasions, it can result in itching, vomiting, severe pain in the affected area, fever, blistering, necrosis of the skin, and blue discoloration. The black widow's venom is one of the most potent in the world. If you're bitten, symptoms can include abdominal pain, local pain around the site of the bite, nausea, fever, and sweating.

SURVIVAL TIP

To prevent encounters with these two poisonous predators, eliminate garage and shed clutter, frequently clean the inside of your home, and keep firewood and debris away from the foundation of your house. If you are bitten by a brown recluse, wash the area with soap and cool water, elevate the affected area, and apply a cold compress. Do not apply heat; it will expedite tissue deterioration. See a doctor if your symptoms don't go away or get worse. If you are bitten by a black widow, see a doctor immediately. Home remedies are generally ineffective.

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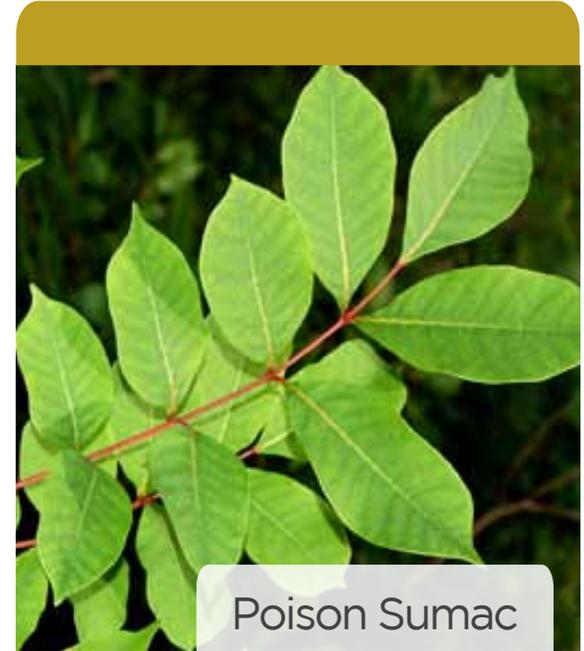
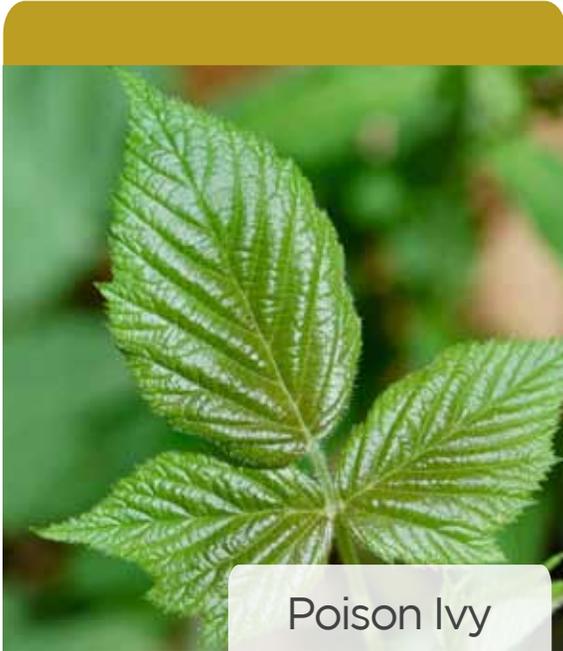
Summer Rashes

Rashes resulting from exposure to poison ivy, oak, and sumac can give anyone the summertime blues. In fact, approximately 50 million people suffer from the itch and discomfort associated with these types of poisonous vegetation each year.

Fortunately, there are steps you can take to identify and avoid these irritants and protect your skin.

The allergic reaction these plants cause is due to urushiol, the active chemical present on their surface. Urushiol is very potent; in fact, the amount of urushiol that fits on the head of a pin is enough to make 500 people itch. Exposure to the chemical often results in contact dermatitis, which accounts for 50 percent of all occupational illnesses, according to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

Summer Insect and Rash Survival Guide



WHAT TO LOOK FOR

This summer rash culprit is commonly found in the East and Midwest regions of the United States. The plants normally have three leaves; however, some can have as many as nine. They often produce green leaves (which become red in the fall) and white berries. Poison ivy may also take the form of a rope-like vine wrapped around a tree trunk.

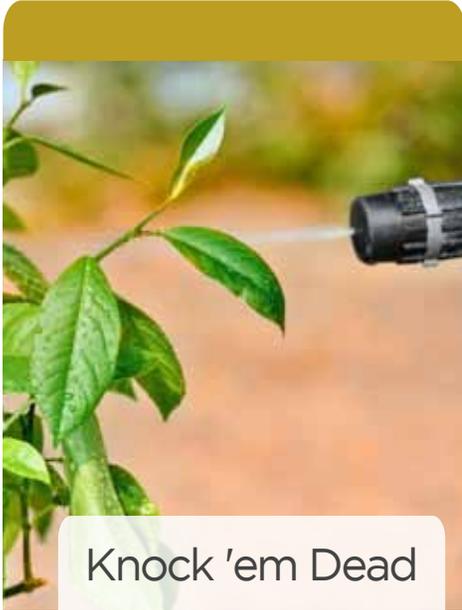
WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Poison oak is found on both coasts and can grow in free-standing clumps or in vines. The leaves resemble those of the oak tree, and the plant often has clusters of yellow berries.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

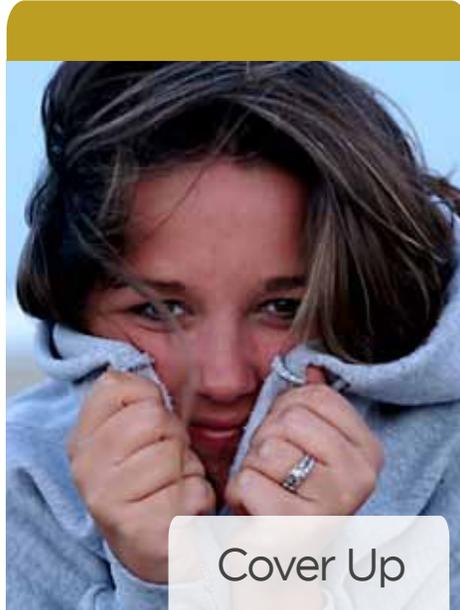
The third member of this toxic trio is found in marshy areas of the Southeast. Poison sumac often grows in tall shrubs, and it typically has between seven and 13 pale green leaves.

Preventing Exposure



Knock 'em Dead

If you have one or more of these plants present in your backyard, an over-the-counter herbicide can be used to kill them. A mixture of water and bleach can also do the trick. Do not burn the plants because urushiol can become airborne, resulting in severe lung irritation.



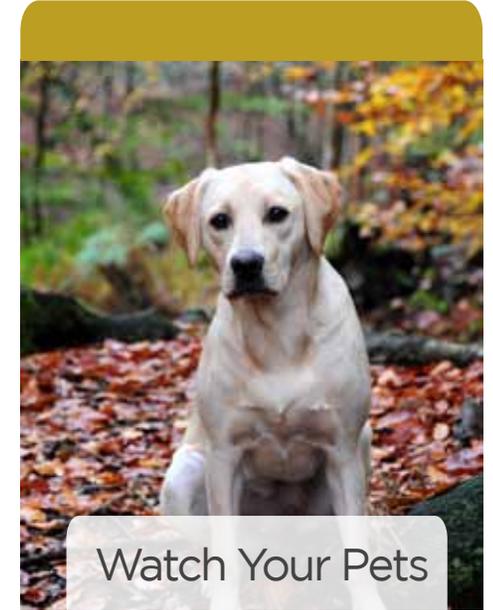
Cover Up

If you know you will be in the woods—camping, hiking, or hunting—wear long sleeves, pants, gloves, and boots. This will prevent any insects or poisonous plants from coming into direct contact with your skin.



Wash Up

Even though you were covered from head to toe on your stroll through the forest, you still may have been exposed. Oil from plants can stick to almost all surfaces. Plus, the oil doesn't dry. Be sure to immediately separate the clothes worn outdoors from your others, and wash them thoroughly.



Watch Your Pets

Try not to let your pets run through the woods. Urushiol can easily stick to their fur and be brought into your home.

After Exposure

Urushiol can penetrate the skin quickly—in as few as 10 minutes. If you do come into contact with poison ivy, oak, or sumac, the FDA suggests the following steps.

- Immediately wash your skin after initial exposure in order to remove the oil.
- Clean any exposed skin with rubbing alcohol.
- Take a shower using soap and warm water.

Use Over-the-Counter Products

Lotions such as calamine, zinc oxide, and hydrocortisone can be used to relieve the itch and dry the rash. Soaks such as Domeboro solution and oatmeal baths may also soothe and dry the rash effectively.

Consult a Doctor

A doctor should be consulted in cases where rashes have spread to the eyes or genitals. The doctor may prescribe a low-grade, oral steroid and a steroid cream. What's more, the American Academy of Dermatology recommends that people who have had severe reactions in the past contact a dermatologist as soon as possible after a new exposure.

Do not Scratch

Although the blisters themselves do not contain urushiol—contrary to the myth that scratching spreads the rash—scratching can lead to infection. Fingernails are a notorious hotspot for dirt and germs, and scratching an open sore can result in further pains.

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