

# Protect Yourself During Poison Ivy Season

## *New Information Available on Treating and Preventing a Scratchy Situation*

(NAPSA)—Poison ivy, oak and sumac are the most common causes of allergic skin rashes in the United States. Experts estimate that as much as 70 percent of the population is allergic to urushiol (you-roo-shee-ol), the oil found in the sap of these plants, and that up to 55 million Americans develop allergic reactions to it each year.

Poison ivy reactions are triggered by the body's allergic response to urushiol, whereby the immune system attacks the skin containing the oil, producing symptoms such as rashes, oozing blisters, itching and swelling. The allergic response occurs anywhere from 12 to 48 hours after exposure to the oil and can take as long as 10 days to three weeks to heal.

### **A New Resource**

Zanfel Laboratories, Inc., the producer of Zanfel™ Poison Ivy Wash, has developed an information pamphlet on ways to prevent and treat an allergic reaction to poison ivy, oak or sumac. Information included in the pamphlet has been favorably reviewed through the American Academy of Family Physicians Foundation's Health Education Program for Patients. Highlights from the education piece are featured below.

### **What to do if you've been exposed to poison ivy, oak or sumac:**

**1. Cleanse:** Immediately clean the area with plain soap and water. Urushiol will bind to the skin anywhere from five minutes to two hours after exposure. Once



**An example of a poison ivy allergic reaction. Wiping contaminated hands on the neck produced the swollen, streaky appearance.**

this occurs, plain soap and water are no longer effective at removing urushiol.

**2. Decontaminate:** Remove and wash all clothes, gloves, shoes and shoelaces that may have come in contact with the oil.

**3. Relieve:** If signs or symptoms appear, use Zanfel Poison Ivy Wash, the only product clinically shown to remove urushiol from the skin after breakout and relieve symptoms. Other common remedies, such as calamine lotion, may temporarily relieve the itch but will not remove the oil.

**4. Don't scratch!** Scratching may cause infection because it allows bacteria from dirt on the hands to enter the skin.

**5. See your doctor:** A visit is in order if symptoms worsen and/or the rash spreads to the mouth, eyes or genitals. Severe reactions may require further treatment.

Poison ivy treatments, such as steroids like hydrocortisone, also

may produce mild and temporary relief of the itch but do nothing to remove urushiol. Experts caution against use of topical creams containing anesthetics or antihistamines, because these agents may actually worsen the rash and are not shown to be effective at relieving symptoms of poison ivy.

Recent clinical evidence shows that Zanfel significantly decreased the redness and swelling triggered by the body's allergic response to poison ivy within a short time after application and, in some cases, seemed to prevent a reaction entirely. The study, conducted by doctors at St. Luke's Regional Resource Hospital in Bethlehem, Pa., found that the wash appeared to bind the toxin, thus eliminating the root cause of the body's allergic response.

"Prior to using Zanfel, no other treatment—topical or systemic—has been as effective at rapidly relieving redness, itch and pain associated with poison ivy," said Alex Davila, M.D., lead author of the study. "Zanfel is the first product to quickly eradicate the painful, irritating symptoms of poison ivy, oak and sumac by actually removing urushiol from the skin so that the healing can begin."

More information can be found in a free brochure, "Poison Ivy, Oak and Sumac: A Rash of Information About Identification, Treatment and Prevention." The brochure and a sample of the wash, which is sold in the first aid sections of drug stores and pharmacies, are available at [www.zanfel.com](http://www.zanfel.com) or by calling 1-800-401-4002.