

SPOTLIGHT ON SAFETY

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TOXIC PLANTS



Western Poison Oak
Courtesy California Poison
Control System

Toxic plants can cause mild to severe dermatitis or other reactions when plant sap, fluids, or thorns contact exposed skin or other tissues. California toxic plants include weeping fig, poison oak, chrysanthemum, geranium, ivy, century plant, crown of thorns, primrose, and firethorn. Symptoms of dermatitis usually develop within 24 - 48 hours after exposure and include redness, blistering, swelling, and aggravated itching of skin exposed to toxic plants. Reactions to toxic plants depend on the individual's sensitivity, degree of exposure, and where on the body the toxic exposure occurs. The following tips can help prevent and treat dermatitis from toxic plants.

Precautions

- The best defense is to not come into contact with them
- Wear a long-sleeved shirt and long pants with boots - tucking your pants into your boots or socks helps prevent toxic plant contact with your skin
- Look for toxic plants before touching objects such as rock outcrops, trees, rocks, remote monitoring equipment, etc.
- Thoroughly inspect the area where you intend to sit

Treatment

- If you develop dermatitis from a toxic plant, wash the affected area with soap, rinse with large amounts of water and dry with a clean cloth
- Change clothes exposed to toxic plants - wash it several times in unmixed laundry loads
- Never scratch an area of skin affected by dermatitis
- Seek professional medical help if dermatitis induced by contact with a toxic plant does not improve or worsens