



# Contact Dermatitis

## Patient and Family Education

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**This teaching sheet contains general information only. Your child's doctor or a member of your child's health care team will talk with you about specific care for your child.**

### **What is contact dermatitis, poison ivy, poison oak, or poison sumac?**

Contact dermatitis is an inflammation of the skin. It occurs after touching objects like clothing, some metals, jewelry, medicines, soaps or plants such as poison ivy, poison oak and poison sumac. The skin may appear red, raised, crusted or blistered.

### **What are the possible symptoms?**

Your child may have one or more of these:

- An itchy rash
- Hives or welts (red, raised areas) on the skin
- Swollen face or eyes
- Rash that can last from one to three weeks
- Irritation and infection caused by scratching

### **How can I help prevent contact dermatitis?**

- Avoid contact with things that cause the problem.
- If skin does come in contact with an item known to cause problems:
  - Remove and wash all clothing and linens that may cause a reaction.
  - Scrub all exposed areas with soap and water.

### **What is the treatment?**

Some general guidelines to follow include:

- Use an antihistamine or steroid only as advised by your child's doctor. Give it for the whole time ordered.
- Do not use any other over-the-counter medicines unless advised by your child's doctor.
- Bathe your child in a baking soda or an oatmeal bath to help with itching.
- For poison ivy, oak or sumac wash outdoor equipment, shoes, jackets or pets that may have plant sap on them.
- Keep your child's fingernails cut short to help keep from scratching the rash open.

**In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.**

# Contact Dermatitis, continued

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## When should I call the doctor?

Call your child's doctor if:

- Shortness of breath or breathing problems occur
- The rash becomes better with treatment and then reappears
- The rash becomes worse after treatment
- The rash covers much of the body
- There is no relief in symptoms after 2 days of treatment
- Your child is very uncomfortable in spite of treatment
- There are any signs of infection:
  - An increase in swelling, redness and pain in the rash area
  - Drainage from rash
  - Fever (temperature over 100.3°F)

Also call your child's doctor if you have questions or concerns about how your child looks or feels.

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