



## Rx Focus

### Poison Ivy

The poison ivy plant is one of the most common causes of allergic reactions. The plant can grow as a shrub or as a ropelike vine, and is distinguishable by its leaves. These plants have leaves that grow in a group of three, which branch off from a single stem. The appearance of the plant does change with the seasons. The plant produces white or yellow flowers in the spring, as well as white berries in the fall. In the summer, the leaves tend to be green in color and change over to yellow or red in early fall.



The poison ivy plant produces oil known as urushiol. This oil is a pale yellow color, which is found in all parts of the plant, and is released when the plant becomes damaged. Once the oil is released and exposed it turns dark brown or black and

can be seen on the leaves of the plant. This oil is the cause of the allergic reaction that occurs. There are a few different ways to come in contact with the oil. It can either be by touching the oil directly from the plant or indirectly from something that has the oil on it. You can also come in contact with it through the air if these plants are burned.

If contact with the oil has occurred, it does not guarantee that you will develop a reaction to it. You need to develop sensitivity to it, and therefore a reaction does not usually

occur with the first exposure. It may take a few encounters before you develop a reaction to it, and this can vary between individuals. A small percentage of the population will never develop this sensitivity and will therefore be resistant to poison ivy. Fortunately, as you age, this sensitivity tends to diminish or even go away.



If you have come in contact with poison ivy, you want to wash the skin with water as soon as possible to try and remove the oil from the skin. This will help to keep it from spreading to other parts of your body, and if done in time, it may prevent it

from being absorbed into the skin. You should shower with warm water and soap, as well as wash your clothing, shoes and any other items that may have come in contact with it. If the item can not be washed, isopropyl alcohol can be used to remove the oil. It is very important to make sure these items are free of the oil, in order to prevent any further contact, which can lead to another reaction. The oil can remain potent for months or even years.

If you develop a reaction to the poison ivy, you will begin to see some red inflammation and swelling within 12 to 48 hours of your exposure. This is generally followed by itching and blisters that form in a linear pattern on the surface of the skin. These blisters can secrete a fluid, however it will not cause the rash to spread. The rash only occurs on skin that has come in contact with the urushiol oil, and these blisters do not contain the oil. If the rash appears gradually in different spots over time, this does not mean that the rash is spreading. It may be due to contact from items that have the oil on them, or it just may be a delayed reaction since the oil absorbs through the skin at slower rates in parts of the body where the skin is thicker or hardened.

Itching that occurs, can be treated with a variety of over the counter products such as topical hydrocortisone cream, oral antihistamine (Benedryl, Claritin), calamine lotion or an oatmeal bath. Products containing aluminum acetate (Burow's solution), zinc acetate, zinc oxide, baking soda or calamine can also be helpful in treating blisters that are oozing. Depending on the severity of the reaction, some people may require prescription items such as oral (Medrol Dosepak) and/or topical corticosteroids to alleviate symptoms and stop the reaction.



### August Health Observances

#### Cataract Awareness Month

Sponsor: American Academy of Ophthalmology  
Website: [www.aao.org](http://www.aao.org)

#### National Immunization Awareness Month

Sponsor: National Partnership for Immunization  
Website: [www.partnersforimmunization.org](http://www.partnersforimmunization.org)

#### Psoriasis Awareness Month

Sponsor: National Psoriasis Foundation  
Website: [www.psoriasis.org](http://www.psoriasis.org)

#### Spinal Muscular Atrophy Awareness Month

Sponsor: Families of Muscular Atrophy  
Website: [www.fsma.org](http://www.fsma.org)

To prevent getting poison ivy, wear a long sleeve shirt and long pants if you are going to be in any area where poison ivy is likely to grow. There are also products that contain bentoquatam (Ivy-Block), which can be applied to help block the oil from being absorbed. Applying these products to any exposed skin can help to prevent exposure to poison ivy. Knowing what poison ivy looks like, how it is spread, and what to do if you come in contact with it, will help you to prevent it from occurring.

**References:**

1. "Poison Ivy, Oak & Sumac." [www.aad.org](http://www.aad.org)
2. "APA Summer Tip Series on Common Ailments" [www.pharmacyandyou.org](http://www.pharmacyandyou.org)
3. "Outsmarting Poison Ivy and Its Cousins" [www.fda.gov](http://www.fda.gov)



## Industry Report

### New Approval for Lipitor™

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has recently approved another indication for the cholesterol lowering agent Lipitor™. Lipitor™ can now also be used to prevent cardiovascular disease by decreasing the risk of a heart attack. It is indicated for people who have normal to slightly high cholesterol levels along with another risk factor for heart disease. These risk factors include high blood pressure, smoking, diabetes, obesity, and family history of heart disease. A clinical trial (Anglo-Scandinavian Cardiac Outcomes Trial) has shown that when Lipitor™ 10mg was given to people who fit these criteria, their risk of heart attack decreased by 36 percent. This data suggests that along with diet and exercise, Lipitor™ not only has excellent cholesterol lowering capabilities but also a cardiovascular benefit as well.

Resources: "FDA Approves Pfizer's Lipitor® to Lower Risk of Heart Attacks" [www.marketwire.com](http://www.marketwire.com)



## New Drug Approvals

### Campral™

**Approved:** 07/30/04

**Chemical Name:** Acamprosate

**Manufacturer:** Lipha Pharmaceuticals

**Approved Indication:** alcohol dependence

**Special Notes:** The effectiveness of Campral may be significantly diminished in patients that continue to drink or abuse other substances at the beginning of treatment.

### Cymbalta™

**Approved:** 08/04/04

**Chemical Name:** duloxetine hydrochloride

**Manufacturer:** Eli Lilly

**Therapeutic Class:** antidepressant

**Approved Indication:** depression

**Special Notes:** Cymbalta has dual action by inhibiting both norepinephrine and serotonin, similar to Effexor.

### Epzicom™

**Approved:** 08/02/04

**Chemical Name:** Abacavir/Lamivudine

**Manufacturer:** GlaxoSmithKline

**Therapeutic Class:** Antiviral (combination nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitor)

**Approved Indication:** HIV-1 infection

**Special Notes:** Epzicom is indicated for use in combination with protease inhibitors and non-nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitors.

### Vytorin™

**Approved:** 07/26/04

**Chemical Name:** Ezetimibe/Simvastatin

**Manufacturer:** Merck & Co. and Schering-Plough Corp.

**Therapeutic Class:** Cholesterol absorption inhibitor/Statin

**Approved Indication:** Hyperlipidemia

**Special Notes:** Combination of Zocor and Zetia cholesterol medications.



## New Generic Approvals

### Levothyroxine Sodium

**Approved:** 07/13/2004

**Brand Name Equivalent:** Synthroid

**Approved Indication:** Hypothyroidism

### Fluconazole

**Approved:** 07/29/2004

**Brand Name Equivalent:** Diflucan

**Approved Indication:** candidiasis

### Glycolax

**Approved:** 07/02/2004

**Brand Name Equivalent:** Miralax

**Approved Indication:** constipation

### Clotrimazole and Betamethasone Lotion

**Approved:** 07/28/2004

**Brand Name Equivalent:** Lotrisone Lotion

**Approved Indication:** fungal skin infections

CBCA Pharmacy Benefits Management  
675 Foxon Road, Suite 204  
East Haven CT 06513  
Phone: (800) 936-1193  
Fax: (203) 468-8416

