



Insect stings and poisonous plants are an issue that many people must pay attention to every day both on and off the job. Some of these sources can also cause an allergic reaction. A few of these allergens may be an issue while on the job. It is important to know what you are allergic to as well as communicating it to others in case of exposure resulting in an emergency.

## Insect Stings

Insect stings are a common cause of allergic reactions on the job. Most people respond to an insect bite with redness and some minor swelling in the sting area. Some individuals have a much more severe reaction including ones that are life-threatening. **A life-threatening reaction** to any allergen, including an insect sting, is called **anaphylaxis**. Anaphylaxis is a life-threatening whole-body allergic reaction that can impair breathing, cause a dramatic drop in blood pressure, and affect the heart rate.

**There are five insects most likely to cause an allergic reaction in the United States.**

Yellow Jackets, honeybees, paper wasps, hornets, And fire Ants.

If working outdoors, survey the work area for any possible nests or areas that could produce these insects. Wear clothing that covers most of the skin

in case of an attack.

**It is important to have an EPI Pen that is easily accessible on the job** if you are at risk for a severe allergic reaction due to insect stings.

## Poisonous Plants:

Poisonous plants are extremely common in the United States. They are one of the most common triggers for rashes every year, for people who spend time outside. It is important to know what poisonous plants look like and how to avoid getting a rash.

### Characteristics of poison plants

- Poison ivy and poison oak have three leaves. “Leaves of three, let it be.”
- Poison ivy grows as a vine or bush.
- Poison oak grows in dry, sandy areas and is less common.
- The leaves can be shiny and change color depending on the time of year.
- Urushiol (oo-roo-shee-ohl) oil triggers an allergic reaction, resulting in an itchy rash.
- Urushiol can remain active on clothing/tools for up to 5 years.
- Symptoms of exposure: burning, itching, swelling or blisters on the skin.

### Prevention

- Stay out of areas where you know poisonous plants can be.
- Wear long pants, a long sleeve shirt, boots, and gloves when entering any area where poisonous plants can be.
- If exposed, wash the skin as soon as possible. If you get most of the oil off quickly, it will help to limit the rash.
- Remove contaminated clothing in a way to avoid contact with oil residues.

- Wash any items or tools that may have been in contact with poisonous plants.
- Never burn poison plants, the burning plant can still release oils that could result in a widespread rash for anyone near the fire.

## Rash Care

- **Initial care:** wash your skin with rubbing alcohol, poison plant wash, degreasing soap, and lots of water.
- **Treatment:** cold compress, calamine lotion, non-prescription hydrocortisone cream, or an antihistamine to ease itching.
- Call your doctor if the rash is near your eyes or covers a large portion of your body.
- Get emergency medical help or call 911 if you have a severe reaction.