Poison ivy plants grow anywhere, but most often in woods and fields. They can cause an allergic reaction on the skin. An oily substance on the leaves causes the rash. An outbreak of poison ivy usually lasts about 2 to 4 weeks.

The poison ivy plant has three shiny leaflets on a stem. Remember "leaflets three, let it be." If you touch the plant, remove your clothes and shoes as soon as possible. Wash the exposed skin with soap and water. Wash your clothes also.

Once a rash develops, bathe or shower frequently, using a different washcloth and towel each time. Wash all clothing that was worn that may have touched the plant. Put on freshly washed, clean clothes and underclothes after each bath or shower. Sheets and pillow cases that touch the affected areas also should be washed. Clean and wash shoes also.

If your child is highly allergic or has facial swelling, he will need a medication prescribed to help heal the rash.

Other Medications:

Domeboro® soaks: (See "Domeboro® Compresses" CARE CARD.) Mix one packet or tablet to one pint of cool water. Dampen a soft cloth with the solution. Lay the cloth on area for 15 minutes 2 to 4 times each day. The solution may be reused for 12 to 24 hours if kept refrigerated.

Apply prescribed medication sparingly to the rash until improved.

Your child’s doctor may also prescribe an oral medication for itching. Follow the dosage directions.

Call your child’s doctor or the Children’s Mercy Hospital Information Line at (816) 234-3188 if:

- Your child develops signs of infection (pus, fever, pain).
- You have questions or concerns.