

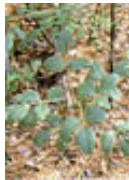
VENATAE, VENOMS AND VIPERS

I. Venatae:

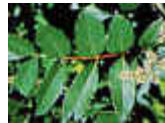
Many agents cause allergic contact dermatitis, (Dermatitis Venata). We will limit this discussion to poison ivy, poison oak and poison sumac. It is a good idea for you to recognize and to avoid skin contact with these plants. They produce a skin reaction marked by redness, small blisters and severe itching. Usually the reaction lasts 2 to 3 weeks. Treatment consists of frequent applications of calamine lotion. Don't scratch! If the disease is widespread or extends to the face or genitalia, oral steroids may be prescribed by your doctor. Occasionally, secondary infection occurs and must be treated with antibiotics.



Poison Ivy



Poison Oak



Poison Sumac

II. Venoms:

A. Insects: wasp, yellow jacket, hornet, bee, fire ants

Contact with these fellows results in painful stings. Often the stinger remains imbedded in the skin. First, attempt to remove the stinger by flicking it off with your finger nail. Don't use forceps, because they tend to compress the venom sac and force more venom into the skin. After removing the stinger, cleanse and disinfect the wound and apply an ice pack. Analgesics, (Tylenol, Advil, ibuprofen), and antihistamines, (Benedryl, Dimetapp, Claritin), may help relieve pain and swelling. Calamine lotion and topical steroids are locally soothing. Rarely, more severe reactions occur which need to be treated by a physician, (hives, breathing difficulties).

B. Ectoparasites: scabies, fleas, ticks, chiggers

For scabies, see your doctor. The remainders are treated with repellants, insecticides, removal, disinfection, antihistamines and topical steroids. Should a high fever or skin rash occur, see your doctor.

C. Arthropods: spiders, scorpions

The Brown Recluse spider produces a painless bite which in a few hours becomes painful and itchy. The bite has a central white core with surrounding redness. After local cleansing, use cold compresses, a sterile dressing; and check with your physician for analgesics, antihistamines, antibiotics and a tetanus booster.

The Black Widow spider produces a pin prick bite which appears like two small red dots. Within 30 to 60 minutes, painful muscle cramps of the abdomen, trunk and extremities ensue, accompanied by a severe headache, and signs of toxicity. Go to the doctor or emergency room

for supportive treatment and analgesics, antihistamines, antibiotics, and possibly antivenin. Ice packs and pressure dressings can give partial relief to painful scorpion bites.

D. *Invertebrates: jelly fish, man-of-war*

Jelly fish and the Portuguese-man-of-war which frequent our gulf coastal waters have specialized “stinging cells”. These cells produce chemical skin irritants which are painful and itchy. Initial treatment with vinegar or rubbing alcohol often gives marked relief. Some folks swear by unseasoned meat tenderizer (papain). Topical steroids and antihistamine creams also are helpful.

E. *Vertebrates: stingrays, catfish, scorpion fish*

Vertebrate wounds often require surgical treatment along with warm soaks, pain killers, antibiotics and tetanus boosters.

III. Vipers: snakes

Focus on taking the victim to the nearest hospital. Attempt to keep the patient inactive. Place a tourniquet snugly around the extremity, but not so tightly that the blood supply is cut off. Nevertheless, loosen the tourniquet every 20 minutes for 3 minutes. If a “snake bite kit” is available, use the suction cups directly on the wound. Warm soaks are helpful. Never attempt to mouth suction the bite, because the wound is then inoculated with organisms from the human mouth and always becomes infected. Never incise the bite to “help it drain”. Far more damage and disfigurement has been caused by well-meaning friends than by the most vicious snake.

Be careful and be prepared!

If you have questions your health care provider at the Health Center is ready to help you.



Healthfully yours,

Dr. Healthberry

For questions or comments you can;

Write "Healthberry" at
University Health Center
100 UH Health Center
Houston, Texas 77204-3019

E-Mail "Healthberry" at JMGray2@central.uh.edu
Fax "Healthberry" at (713)743-5164.