

## **Cactus, Ringworm, & Poison Ivy, Oak, and Sumac!**

Cactus and other spiny plants have two kinds of needles: Big and small. The big ones are big enough to see. You can pull them out with tweezers or needle-nose pliers. But - when you pull out a cactus needle, pull it out straight, the way it went in. Be careful you don't break it off IN your skin! (See a doctor!) The small needles are a challenge. You can feel them, but you can't see them. A stiff sharp edge will scrape most of them out. The rest of them will have to work themselves out over time. Putting a drawing salve on these and bandaging them may work.

Ringworm is not caused by a worm (thank goodness!). It's caused by a fungus that lives in dirt. People get ringworm from the dirt on their hands, when they touch their faces or scalp. Ringworm is no more contagious than athlete's foot. The best treatment is to use an athlete's foot ointment like Tinactin or Absorbine Jr., and keep the area as clean as possible. Look for the generic Tolnaftate. You cannot get ringworm from cats.

Poison Ivy, Poison Oak, and Poison Sumac cause rashes from an allergic reaction. The best thing to do is to learn to identify and avoid these plants. The rash does not happen immediately. If you know you have been exposed, you have 10 to 20 minutes to wash the area vigorously with soap and water before the oils from these plants affect your skin. Change clothes and put the exposed clothing into a sealed plastic bag. Treat the rash by keeping the area clean and using an allergy cream and a cortisone cream. Benadryl cream works well, but brand names can be expensive. Look for the generic Diphenhydramine. Wash exposed clothing separately from your other clothing, with a chlorine bleach if possible.

This information is courtesy of Eric Johnson, an EMT who worked with people in Renaissance Faires, who had poor access to health care. Thanks, Eric!

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