

## Treating Poison Oak Homeopathically: 5 Case Studies

Ron, a male aged 43, complains of a poison oak rash on the insides of his legs. The rash appears light red with raised papules. It is mostly dry. He says it itches during the daytime a four on a scale of one to ten and a nine out of ten at night. The rash is better with hot water. Scratching relieves the itching, though only for a short while. What remedy do you give?

If you said Rhus toxicodendron, you are right. If you think that was easy, keep reading. If you didn't, definitely keep reading. I gave Rhus-t 30C three times a day. Ron was %50 better the next day. Rhus toxicodendron is one of what I call the Rhus polycrests--Anacardium (Anac), Croton Tiglium (Crot-t), Graphites (Graph), Rhus Toxicodendron (Rhus-t) and Sulphur (Sulph).

**The key indications for Rhus toxicodendron are: vesicles in a line of the scratch; amelioration with warm applications and hot water; angry looking skin; eyes swollen shut; and swelling of the penis causing difficulty urinating.** The eruptions of Rhus-t skin appear red and angry looking, and the eyes become swollen closed with red vesicles. The discharge is thin yellow. The Rhus-t rash itches intensely but may also sting, burn or tingle. The rash can be anywhere. Characteristically it is found on the face, eyes, palms and genitals. The itching is worse at night, warmth of bed, and better with warm or hot applications--the hotter the water the better. After scratching, the Rhus-t rash gets crusty, and pustules form with burning vesicles. The itching is worse after scratching, and the vesicles form in the line of the scratch. The Rhus-t patient may be unable to void urine from the swelling of the genitals, and he is mentally restless, stiff, and irritable. Rhus toxicodendron is a very common remedy for poison ivy or poison oak for obvious reasons.

Janet has poison oak that is light red with raised patches. There are granular areas though the rash is mild in general. The rash is on her cheeks and the dorsum of her hand. She says the itching is eight out of ten. The rash is worse heat, hot water, perspiration and thinking about it. Scratching aggravates the symptoms. What remedy does Janet need?

If you said Anacardium you're starting to get the hang of it. Anacardium 30C three times a day improved the rash significantly over the next two days.

**The key indications for Anacardium orientale are: swelling with a red areola around the pustules; intense itching, worse scratching; and worse left side. The Anac rash appears with red crusts that are sharply defined.** The blisters are the size of a pinhead,s or they can be full vesicles. The discharge is yellow or transparent and hardens in open air. The Anac rash stimulates intense itching that may cause the sufferer to dig her nails into the skin. There may be formication or burning--especially after scratching. The rash is found on the chest, neck, axillae, upper arms, abdomen, scrotum, or the thighs. Often Anac is a left sided remedy. The application of hot water or the warmth of bed aggravates Anacardium. It is also worse at night and from scratching.

Rubbing and hot water ameliorate. Scratching leads to burning or stinging. Generally Anac is averse to work, depressed, and sleepless.

Abbey had poison oak on her face, forearms, chest, and abdomen. The itching was unbearable, a ten out of ten. The red, raised vesicles were weeping a clear discharge. The itching was worse heat, hot water, and from the general heat during the day. It was better with anything cold. Scratching ameliorates the itching then aggravates. What remedy is needed for Abbey?

Croton tiglium 30C immediately calmed her down and the itching was reduced 50% by morning.

**Croton tiglium is a common poison ivy or poison oak remedy. The key indications are: oozing yellowish serum leading to thick scabs; pustules that dry into yellow scabs; and a general feeling of "hidebound" that is better after sleep.** The small, numerous vesicles may be pustular or have grey brown crusts. The discharge of yellowish serum leads to thick scabs. The Croton person feels tight all over, as if a string stretches between parts. The itch is at first tingling or stinging and later burning. The scalp is often affected as well as the face around the eyes or on the genitals. The left side may also be worse than the right. Croton is worse touch, at night, in the morning and with washing. It is better with gentle rubbing. Slight mild touch makes the itching better in a mild case. The itching may be better after sleep. Scratching is painful. Mentally the Croton patient cannot stand the rash as it causes tremendous turmoil in the nervous system.

Gabriel, a seven year old boy, had a mild case of poison ivy. His mother described him as rather dull. His arms were mostly covered with a rash that turned crusty white. Further questioning revealed that the discharge was rather thick. He was bothered by the way it looked and how it made the bed "gross." Gabriel needed which remedy?

Yes, Graphites not only has the thick honey-like discharge, it also has white crusts. **The key indications for Graph are: the glutinous, sticky, honey-like discharge after scratching; and the rash's proclivity for the bends of joints, and the covered parts.** The Graph rash can be dry or crusty with rough or thick skin. There may be cracking with or without discharge. The Graph discharge can be glutinous, sticky, honey-like, yellow, or corrosive. The sensation of the rash is burning or stinging. Itching leads to digging in with the nails. The Graph rash occurs on the scalp, face, neck behind ears, groin, bends of joints, folds of skin, and on covered parts. The itching is worse at night, evening, warmth at night, cold, or wet. It is better tearing the flesh or with hard rubbing. Scratching leads to discharges and crusts, burning and throbbing. The Graph rash will often lead to scratching until the skin is raw. The Graph person is often mentally dull.

Ted, a forty year old man, began to have symptoms on the inside of his arms and thighs four days ago. The rash spread to his face and hands. The face didn't itch as much. Scratching made it feel good for while. Ted's hands were swollen, though the rashes were drying out. There was not much discharge, a clear liquid. Ted easily said ten out of ten when asked about itching. The itching was worse at night, from heat, and during sleep from 2 am to 6 am. Ted was hot and grumpy, gritting his teeth trying not to scratch.

By now you could guess Sulphur. **Sulphur's key indications are: worse warmth of bed, scratching, washing, bathing; scratching until bleeding which ameliorates the scratching; and dry crusty pustules.** The Sulph rhus eruption can look like almost any rash, but it can be characterized in numerous ways: pustules, dry, crusty, swollen, harsh, and rough. After scratching, the bleeding makes crusts, pustules, or vesicles.

Sulphur may discharge glutinous, white, or yellow. Scratching aggravates the discharge. Typically, Sulph is left sided and affects the scalp and the face. Sulphur modalities are worse getting warm, warmth of bed, scratching, washing, bathing, 11 AM, and at night. Itching ameliorates with scratching, but is followed by smarting, burning, aching, numbness, and, of course, bleeding. The general Sulph keynotes apply, such as restless in bed at night, unable to sleep, and irritability.

These five cases and five outlines of materia medica illustrate by far the most common remedies for both Poison Ivy and Poison Oak. There are at least twenty-five other remedies that prove useful when treating these rashes, but are much less common. With the right information homeopathy doesn't have to be hard. It simply requires a good book, a good teacher and much time to study and practice! Enjoy the summer!

Dr. Joel Kreisberg, DC. MA, a graduate of Hahnemann College of Homeopathy, recently published his first book entitled "Homeopathic Handbook for Poison Ivy and Poison Oak." He lives and works in Berkeley, CA.