

Oak processionary moth (*Thaumetopoea processionea*)

Oak processionary moth (OPM) caterpillars feed on the leaves of several species of oak and some other broadleaf species. OPM is present in the UK, but outbreaks are currently only established in south-east England.

Caterpillars:

- very long white hairs alongside almost undetectable shorter hairs;
- a grey body and dark head;
- older larvae have a central dark stripe and paler side stripes.

OPM caterpillars are a hazard to human health. If their hairs come into contact with people or animals, they can cause painful skin, eye and throat irritation, rashes, and in rare cases, allergic reactions. **Do not touch or remove caterpillars or nests yourself.**

Look out for skeletonized remains of leaves, and white silken nests at the base of lower branches, on the trunk or on the base of the host tree. Caterpillars are commonly found in clusters on leaves or in nose-to-tail processions on branches or tree trunks. Highest risk of caterpillar sightings/exposure occurs in May-July.

If you suspect it, report it by visiting <https://treealert.forestresearch.gov.uk/> or use the QR code.



OPM caterpillar procession on tree trunk. Credit: Ilya Mityishey (EPPO)



OPM silken nests. Credit: Wietse den Hartog NVWA (NPPO, the Netherlands)



Example of skin irritation caused by OPM caterpillar contact. Credit: Henry Kuppen