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# Postexposure prevention of *Toxicodendron* dermatitis by early forceful unidirectional washing with liquid dishwashing soap



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## CLINICAL CHALLENGE

Postexposure prevention of *Toxicodendron* dermatitis consists primarily of early washing of exposed skin with water and soap or other products. Commercially available products can be costly, especially when used for large or repetitive contacts. Moreover, 1 study demonstrated that it is the act of washing rather than the type of wash that matters.<sup>1</sup> Although some authorities emphasize that washing should be performed gently rather than forcefully, there is limited information about effective washing technique.<sup>2</sup> We present a technique that has worked numerous times for the authors and others.

## SOLUTION

We report successful prevention of *Toxicodendron* dermatitis with early (within 1-2 hours)<sup>1,3</sup> forceful unidirectional washing with a damp washcloth and liquid dishwashing soap (in our patients we used Dawn dish soap [Procter & Gamble, Cincinnati, OH]). The washcloth should be applied with repetitive, high-pressure, single-direction wipes under hot, running water. This provides the friction and heat necessary to remove the glutinous oil. Removing urushiol can be thought of as comparable to removing axle grease. The full-body wash is performed for 3 rounds of about 3 minutes. Because it does not involve violent rapid back-and-forth scrubbing or irritating products such as strong soaps, the wash does not cause significant irritation. This technique is simple, inexpensive, and safer than high-potency topical and/or systemic corticosteroids.

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