

## Dish soap for complete tick detachment



Elizabeth Tkachenko, BS,<sup>a,b</sup> Kaitlin Blankenship, MD,<sup>b</sup> Dori Goldberg, MD,<sup>b</sup>  
Mark J. Scharf, MD,<sup>b</sup> Shelly Weedon, PA-C,<sup>b</sup> and Nikki A. Levin, MD, PhD<sup>b</sup>  
*Worcester, Massachusetts*

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### THERAPEUTIC CHALLENGE

Despite the prevalence of tick-borne illness, the safest and most efficacious mode of tick removal remains controversial.<sup>1</sup> A variety of mechanical, chemical, and physical techniques have been described, but evidence remains limited. Forceps or tweezers removal is recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; however, this technique's efficacy for complete detachment is 82.5% and thus may be complicated by retained mouthparts.<sup>2</sup> Liquid soap recently showed 100% efficacy in a series of 9 patients.<sup>1</sup> We describe this technique and demonstrate its success in a dermatologic setting.

### THE SOLUTION

In 3 patients with attached ticks in our clinic and an additional 75 at another practice site, gentle circular massage for 30 seconds with undiluted liquid dish soap on a paper towel led to complete detachment of the tick, including mouthparts, in all patients (Video 1, available at <http://www.jaad.org>). Approximately 1 tablespoon of dish soap was applied to a dry paper towel until saturated, then massaged gently over the tick. All ticks completely released from the attachment site and were found on the paper towel with the head intact. The bite area was then cleaned with water and prophylaxis prescribed, when appropriate. Cases included both *Ixodes* and *Dermacentor* ticks located on the abdomen, upper back, and popliteal fossa.

This technique is painless, low-risk, and does not require special equipment. It is fast and simple to perform in the clinic or at home. Although this method has a theoretical risk of regurgitation of tick stomach contents into the bite wound, any manual or chemical tick extraction poses a similar risk, which is outweighed by the benefit of timely tick removal.

### REFERENCES

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From the University of Massachusetts Medical School,<sup>a</sup> and the Department of Dermatology, University of Massachusetts Memorial Health Care.<sup>b</sup>

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Correspondence to: Nikki A. Levin, MD, PhD, Department of Dermatology, UMass Memorial Health Care, 281 Lincoln St, Worcester, MA 01605. E-mail: [nikki.levin@umassmemorial.org](mailto:nikki.levin@umassmemorial.org).

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