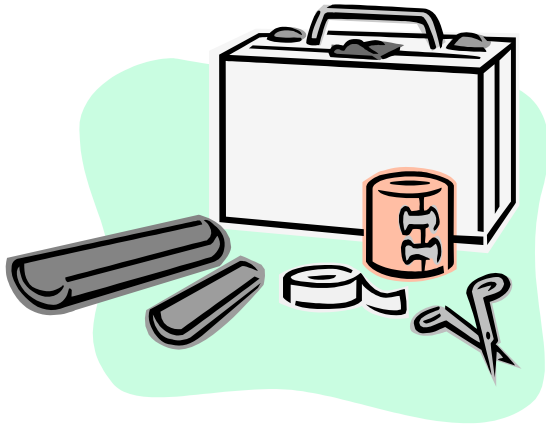


FIRST AID KITS



HOW TO CHOOSE A KIT

A well equipped first aid kit is essential particularly on trips where medical care is out of reach, whether they are organised tours, backpacking or camping trips, or just weekends away. Keeping the first aid kit at home or in your car is also useful for those unexpected accidents.

Weight and space considerations are important when making your purchase. Kits

come in a variety of sizes and shapes, and some are designed for specific activities such as yachting or surfing. We recommend soft cases if travelling, as these are more convenient to pack and lighter in weight.

The size of the kit you need will depend on the number of people it supports, and the type of activities you are likely to participate in. There are individual, family, and group kits designed to equip you for remote locations and travel.

WHAT SHOULD I HAVE IN MY KIT?

Starting with a good pre-packaged first aid kit can save you time and money. Basic kits have items to help the most common problems you may encounter, which are insect bites, cuts and wounds, blisters, sunburn, and allergic reactions. Items can be added according to your particular needs- e.g. extra blister pads for those on long treks, or waterproof dressings and antibiotic ointments for surfers who may get coral cuts.

If you are putting together your own kit, consider the following items:

FIRST AID MANUAL – make sure you have a guide to the treatment of the most common and serious emergencies. Unless you know how to use the products, they are useless.

DISPOSABLE GLOVES - when treating anyone, bleeding or not, they keep your germs out of the wound and the other person's germs out of you.

CPR SHIELDS - protect a person while administering mouth to mouth resuscitation.

THERMOMETER – always helpful to monitor an illness and determine its severity. If you are going to a cold climate, a special thermometer is necessary to register low temperatures experienced during hypothermia.

RESEALABLE PLASTIC BAGS – Apart from containing all your first aid items tidily, these can be used to hold ice, snow, or cold water for cooling strains and sprains.

SCISSORS, TWEEZERS, AND NEEDLES OR SPLINTER PROBES - tools to alter bandage size, remove splinters and to reach deeply embedded foreign bodies.

IRRIGATION SYRINGES – use these to cleanse a wound with an antiseptic such as diluted Betadine (1 %), or to wash dirt out of a wound with normal saline or purified water. Superficial foreign bodies can be washed out of eyes carefully with clean water or saline solution also.

SOAP SCRUB SPONGES – these are for cleaning dirty abrasions, where the grime is ground into the wound and the irrigation syringe is not fully effective. Use the sponge to scrub the wound clean. Follow the scrubbing with a clean water flush. Especially useful if you have been bitten by an animal and running water is not available.

IODINE SWABS OR SOLUTION - iodine acts as a topical disinfectant. Use iodine to wipe wounds clean after flushing with water from a water bottle or irrigation syringe. Iodine can also be dissolved in unsafe water to create a disinfectant flush, and also can be used to purify dirty drinking water. Wait 20 minutes after putting it into the water to ensure full disinfecting action.

ANTISEPTIC TOWELETTES – towelettes or alcohol swabs can be used for cleaning very minor wounds. Also for wiping your hands clean before and after treating open wounds.

TINCTURE OF BENZOIN – this is very sticky and can be swabbed anywhere tape is used to ensure that the tape stays in place. Benzoin is an irritant and should be kept out of open wounds.

FABRIC BANDAGES (Band-Aids) – cover small wounds after they have been cleaned.

KNUCKLE BANDAGES – cover small and difficult –to- bandage scraped knuckles. Knuckle bandages allow an excellent range of motion after application.

GAUZE PADS, COMBINES, COHESIVE & ADHESIVE TAPE – used to create a very effective cover for larger open wounds. Remember to touch only the

edges when you're handling sterile material. Adhesive tape can also be used on hot spots to prevent blisters.

NON-ADHERENT DRESSINGS - such as melolin, are designed for wounds that tend to weep excess fluid as they help prevent sticking.

OPEN WEAVE DRESSINGS - such as fixomull or mefix, allows a wound to "breathe" while protecting the wound. This lets moisture from the wound escape. They are particularly recommended for use on burns and scalds. After 5-7 days the bandage can be removed by soaking with oil a couple of hours so as not to remove new skin.

BUTTERFLY CLOSURES OR STERISTRIPS - pull the edges of a gaping wound together before bandaging and until a doctor can suture the wound if indicated. Steristrips are thinner and breathe better than the old-fashioned butterfly bandages. Closing a wound helps keep dirt out of it and minimises scarring. Remember to only close up clean wounds as serous infections occur if dirt is trapped in a wound. Animal bites in particular should not be closed (but may be covered) till medical care is obtained.

ELASTIC BANDAGES - for wrapping sprained wrists and ankles. Also good for holding splints, large bandages and ice packs in place.

TRIANGULAR BANDAGE (with safety pins) - to make a sling for arm injuries, such as severe sprains or even fractures. Also can be used to tie splints and to hold large wound dressings in place. Serves as an excellent pressure bandage, and will work as a tourniquet (as long as you fully understand when and how to do it).

SECOND SKIN DRESSING – This is a gel type dressing which can be used to cover small burns after cleaning, and is very useful for the treatment and prevention of blisters. It is best to leave an intact blister alone since it is nature's way of cushioning a damaged area. An intact blister also provides a sterile environment, less likely to become infected. However, most blisters on hard surfaces (such as on your heel when hiking) will pop anyway. Once this happens, a blister is best managed by taking the top off the blister, washing the area with a mild antiseptic, and applying the Second Skin. Second Skin needs to be held in place with tape.

SAM SPLINTS – splints are used to immobilise painful joints and broken bones. If you have room for one, Sam splints can be cut and moulded to fit any extremity, can be fashioned into a usable cervical collar, and are reusable. Otherwise tying anything firm adjacent to the painful area to immobilise it will work at short notice, even a rolled up newspaper or a smooth branch.

EXTRAS to consider packing in your kit include:

Normal Saline Solution
Waterproof dressings
Dermasoft gel to clean hands without water
Sterile Needles and Syringes
Eye pads
Cotton tips
Space blanket especially if travelling to cold climates

Also consider investing in first aid training – always a great skill to have.

You may wish to discuss with your doctor medications to take with you, which may include:

Analgesics
Anti-inflammatories
Anti-histamines
Anti-diarrhoeals
Rehydration sachets
Antibiotic creams
Oral antibiotics

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