

Stocking Your First-Aid Kit

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The importance of a well-stocked first aid kit is a point that cannot be stressed enough. Aside from the fact that, ideally, one should always have such a kit on hand for common ailments like minor cuts, burns, bruises and abrasions, your first aid kit becomes a matter of critical importance in the event of any serious emergency or natural disaster.

In emergency situations, a properly prepared first aid kit can literally mean the difference between life and death for you or your loved ones, but the sad fact is that most people don't even have a first aid kit in their home anymore.

In an era of widespread hospital and clinical care facilities, most families keep a box or two of bandaids on hand and a tube of Neosporin, but not much else.

But when real emergencies happen or natural disasters strike, those care facilities are quickly overwhelmed and unable to deal with everyone who needs care.

Luckily, you can protect yourself, your family and your loved ones from going without [basic medical necessities](#) in times of crises by simply investing a bit of time and money in a high quality, well-stocked first aid kit.

A good [first aid kit](#) can be assembled one piece at a time, and generally at a pretty reasonable cost. Building your own first aid kit, as opposed to purchasing one of the ready-made kits that are widely available, has some additional advantages, too.

Not only will you save money, but you'll also know precisely what you packed since you'll have picked out each item. Packing your own kit also means you can include any specific medications that you or your family may require in an emergency, an important consideration that no ready-made kit can ever provide for.

What To Pack

All first aid kits can be personalized to contain specific things you or your family might need in an emergency, but here's a list of some of the most common and fundamental items that your first aid kit should contain:

- Medical sutures; these are used for applying stitches and can usually be obtained at a pharmacy or online for a fairly reasonable price. You can also get sutures from most vets.
- Antiseptic; this might be something as simple as Neosporin or Tea Tree Oil, but liquid iodine serves phenomenally as a topical antiseptic; it can also be used to purify water.
- Bandages, including bandaids of a variety of sizes, non-stick gauze bandages of various sizes and elastic Ace-style bandages for treating or securing sprains.
- Arm splints; even if you just include a few sturdy, light-weight lengths of wood (8 – 12 inches will do) including some form of splinting material is a good idea. Broken arms, wrists and fingers can happen rather easily, and a splint goes a long way toward stabilizing, relieving pain and fostering healing of such wounds.
- Scissors, a good, sturdy pair of scissors and possibly also a finer, ultra-sharp pair of surgical scissors, for use cutting bandages down or for other emergencies.

- Pain medication, generally an over-the-counter medication such as acetaminophen (Tylenol) or aspirin; note that aspirin has marked blood-thinning effects, however, so acetaminophen may be a preferable medication to use in emergencies.
- Prescription medication for yourself or any family members. At least a one week supply of necessary medication should be stored in your first aid kit at all times. Most prescription medication has a long shelf-life, but be sure to change the medication out periodically to keep it fresh; most doctors have no problem with you filling an extra prescription specifically for the purpose of saving it in case of an emergency.
- Emergency tourniquet; this is used to stop bleeding by cutting off the blood flow, generally for use on an arm or leg when there is substantial blood loss from a wound. A tourniquet can be made from a cord or even a torn piece of cloth, but emergency tourniquets are available that resemble a traditional blood pressure cuff.
- Medical (adhesive) tape, this goes with the bandages mentioned above, particularly in the case of gauze bandages when you will need something to adhere them over a wound.
- Burn salve or aloe vera for the treatment of burns is an excellent, necessary item for any first aid kit; you may also include special dressings for burns, and colloidal or ionic silver has been used in hospital burn wards for decades.
- Ammonia inhalants, commonly known as smelling salts, are a useful addition to a first aid kit but should be used with caution. Smelling salts are used to help wake someone up who has passed out, fainted or become unconscious for some reason; when the reason for unconsciousness is unknown, it may be advisable to wait before using smelling salts. Note: ammonia inhalants can be particularly aggravating to the lungs and respiratory system, so individuals with known respiratory illnesses should avoid their use.
- A thermometer; a traditional thermometer will seldom lead you wrong, but if you use an electronic one instead just be sure to pack extra batteries in your kit for it. Don't underestimate the value of a thermometer in an emergency; running a fever or becoming chilled can be deadly in a survival situation.
- Tweezers are immensely useful, especially if you have to clean out a wound.
- Eye drops or other neutral fluid intended for flushing and rinsing the eyes; a 4 oz. bottle is generally sufficient.
- Instant ice / instant heat packs can provide the heating or the cooling necessary to reduce swelling, alleviate pain or warm you up accordingly; they are light weight and very affordable, available in outdoors stores as well as online.
- Rubbing alcohol for use in sterilizing needles, sutures, medical tools and wounds.

There are many other items that you might choose to pack in your [first aid kit](#), such as antihistamines if you or your family members are known to suffer from allergies. Whether you buy a preassembled kit or create your own, be sure to familiarize yourself with all the contents of your first aid kit and specialize it to the known medical needs of your family ahead of time.

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This article has been written by Gaia Rady for [Survivopedia](#).

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