

The Knowledge House Guide to:

Stocking a First Aid Kit / Medicine Cabinet

A well-stocked medicine cabinet or first aid kit is a necessity in every household. Having an assortment of medical supplies available will help you to effectively treat common injuries and ailments at a moment's notice without having to run to the store. Keep your first aid supplies in an easy-to-retrieve location that is out of the reach of young children, because many items in a first-aid kit can be hazardous to them.

You can purchase pre-packaged first aid kits or customize one to your particular needs. You may want a large kit for home, a small kit for biking or hiking, and an extra kit for taking on car trips. (But keep in mind that extreme heat or cold can render some medications ineffective.) Plastic tackle boxes, tool boxes, or lunch boxes are ideal storage containers. They are lightweight, sturdy, have carrying handles, and offer plenty of space.

The basic contents of a first aid kit / medicine cabinet should include:

- Adhesive tape, duct tape or medical tape to hold gauze in place
- Aloe vera gel for burns
- Antibiotic ointment (bacitracin, neomycin, polymycin) for cuts and scrapes
- Antihistamine (Benadryl) for insect bites, hives, and allergic reactions
- Antiseptic wipes
- Aspirin, acetaminophen, and/or ibuprofen for pain, headaches, and fevers
- Bandage strips (Band-Aid, Curad, etc.) in assorted shapes and sizes
- Calamine lotion for insect bites, rashes, and poison ivy
- Cotton balls
- Cotton-tipped swabs
- Elastic bandage (Ace, Coban, etc.)
- First-aid manual
- Gauze pads (4-inch) and roller gauze (2- 3-inch) to dress cuts, scrapes, and burns
- Hand sanitizer
- Hydrocortisone cream or ointment for persistent itching
- Lip balm (Chapstick)
- Moistened towelettes
- Nail clippers
- Needle
- Petroleum jelly
- Rubbing alcohol to clean thermometers, tweezers, and scissors
- Safety pins in assorted sizes
- Scissors
- Sunscreen
- Syringe, medicine cup, or spoon for administering medicines
- Thermometer
- Throat lozenges
- Tongue depressors for checking sore throats
- Toothpaste, floss, mouth rinse, and a new spare toothbrush
- Tweezers for removing splinters

Additional items that you may want to include:

- Antifungal cream (Lamisil, Lotrimin, Micatin) for athlete's foot
- Aspercreme (topical analgesic cream for muscle aches)
- Bulb suction device for flushing out wounds
- Calcium carbonate tablets (Tums, Rolaids) for heartburn
- Cough medicine (Robitussin, Triaminic, Delsym, etc.)
- Decongestant (Sudafed, Dristan)
- Dental repair kit for temporarily fixing a lost filling or crown
- Disposable latex or plastic gloves (at least two pairs)
- Eyeglass cleaner/repair kit
- Flashlight to check ears, nose, throat, and eyes (and extra batteries)
- Foil blanket (mylar space blanket)
- Home remedy ingredients (baking soda, vinegar, meat tenderizer, clove oil, etc.)
- Hot water bottle
- Ice pack or instant cold pack
- Magnifying glass
- Medical history and consent forms for each family member
- Medicated Chest Rub (Vicks VapoRub, Mentholatum Ointment)
- Moleskin for blisters
- Over-the-counter and/or prescription medications (that don't need refrigeration)
- Package of tissues
- Pedialyte to prevent dehydration in children suffering from diarrhea or vomiting
- Plastic bags for the disposal of contaminated materials
- Rub-on painkiller (Anbesol, Orajel) for toothaches or teething pain
- Saline nose drops to clear stuffy noses
- Sore throat spray (Chloraseptic)
- Splint
- Sterile eyewash (such as a saline solution) to rinse irritants from eyes
- Tooth preservation kit consisting of salt solution and a sealable travel case
- Triangular bandage
- Zinc Oxide ointment to soothe minor skin irritations
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Emergency Contacts:

The most important items in your family's first aid kit may actually be names and phone numbers. Securely tape the following contact information inside your kit or cabinet:

- Family doctor
- Local hospital
- Poison and Drug Information Center hotline (1-800-222-1222)
- Regional Poison Control Center
- Police and fire department
- Two closest neighbors (to call if you need help)

Did You Know...? Since 2003, the American Association of Poison Control Centers and American Academy of Pediatrics no longer recommend keeping activated charcoal or ipecac syrup on hand, as the effectiveness and safety of these substances has not been demonstrated.