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Share the Wellness Tip

Prepare and Pack Family First Aid Kits

A well-stocked first aid kit that's handy for adults, but out of the reach of small children, can help you cope with medical emergencies until help arrives. You can purchase prepackaged kits or you can make your own using a sturdy container that opens easily. Plastic tackle boxes or art supply containers are good choices since they are lightweight, spacious and have handles for easy toting.

Choosing what belongs in a first aid kit can depend on a family's needs. Where appropriate, use products with child safety caps.

The following items are suitable for most kits:

- Scissors for cutting gauze pads
- Tweezers for removing slivers or insect stingers
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- Disposable gloves and hand cleaner to reduce the risk of infection when treating open wounds
- Sterile, adhesive bandages in assorted sizes for minor scrapes and cuts
- Disposable, instant cold packs activated by squeezing for burns, strains and sprains
- Adhesive tape for securing gauze bandages
- Sterile gauze pads for making bandages
- Triangular bandage for making an arm sling
- Antiseptic ointment to prevent infection
- Emergency phone numbers

More useful items:

- First aid manual for information
- Elastic bandages for sprains
- Thermometer for taking temperature
- Aspirin and aspirin substitute, like acetaminophen, for aches, pains, and fever (children cannot take aspirin)
- Hydrocortisone cream for bites and itching
- Cotton balls and swabs, and tissues for general care

First aid kits should be checked regularly in order to replace missing or expired items. Ideally, you should check a kit at least once a year, either when the time changes or with a date you'll remember, such as your birthday.

It's a good idea to have one kit in your car and another in your home. Also, don't forget to pack a kit when going on vacation. If you like to hike, bike or boat, take a kit with you or know where you can get one.

Sources: KidsHealth.org; American Red Cross

