

Louisiana Pharmacists Association Educates Patients about First Aid Kits

The arrival of summer coincides with several exciting activities: the end of another school year, beginning of summer camps, and annual vacations. Planning a vacation requires much preparation, like deciding on a destination, booking rooms, and planning meals, but a travel necessity many people overlook is a well-stocked first aid kit. Disaster can strike anyone, anywhere, and knowing you are prepared to handle a small range of emergencies when medical attention is not immediately present might be the difference between life and death. A reliable first aid kit is essential when travelling, but the task of creating one may seem daunting.

When making a first aid kit, you need to consider several things: who you will primarily be treating with the kit (yourself or others), how many people you wish to treat, the types of medical conditions you may need to treat, and the size of the kit you wish to make (a larger kit kept at home versus a smaller kit to be kept in a vehicle). It is also important to maintain a BLS/CPR certification, and, if you intend to make a first aid kit for multiple people to use, that they are familiar with the kits contents, its location, and understand some basic first aid techniques. Outside of the necessities outlined below, you have the freedom to individualize your kits to your specific purpose. A color-coded chart has been included to serve as a reference when making your kits. First aid necessities are listed in the white portion of the chart. The items listed in the orange field are things that you might use more often and should be included in a kit if you have room. The items listed in the pink field are those that will be rarely used but are useful to have should the need arise.

Of the basic necessities, fabric bandages are best because they are more flexible, which increases their adhesive ability on skin over time versus other bandage types. If possible, the bandages included in your kit should have their absorbent pads surrounded by adhesive material, ensuring the wound is fully protected from the environment when the bandage is applied. Nitrile gloves are recommended over other glove types because nitrile gloves are hypoallergenic and mimic the durability and flexibility of latex gloves. Nitrile gloves also provide a better barrier against oil-based products like ointments and creams. A headlamp is preferred over a regular flashlight because a headlamp allows you to maintain the use of both of your hands while providing light wherever you need it. A space emergency blanket, or some form of mylar blanket, is useful to help control a person's core body temperature if they have experienced significant blood loss or other trauma to the body. Medications in first aid kits should be stored in a waterproof container. Check the medication regularly to ensure no expired medicine is kept in the kit. The medications listed below as "essential" are general recommendations, and if you are allergic to any of these, you can ask your pharmacist to recommend appropriate alternatives. Extra prescription medications, like blood pressure medications, epinephrine autoinjectors, or emergency inhalers, should be kept in the kit as a backup in case an emergency strikes.

Regardless of what your summer plans are, creating a functional first aid kit should be a necessity for the coming months. Being caught in an emergency situation is a rare occurrence, but facing that situation without a first aid kit could be disastrous. Do not take the chance, as even a basic kit may help prevent serious medical consequences and injuries.

First Aid Necessities	
Equipment	Medicines
Fabric Band Aids (Various sizes)	Antihistamines (Diphenhydramine)
Gauze (3x3 or 4x4)	Low dose aspirin
Antiseptic wipes (Alcohol or benzalkonium chloride based)	Antibiotic ointment (Triple Antibiotic Ointment)
Space blanket (for managing core temperature)	Painkillers (Acetaminophen, Ibuprofen)
Fine point tweezers	Antidiarrheal (Loperamide)
Nitrile Gloves (several pairs)	Hydrocortisone cream
Medical tape (1 or 3 inch roll)	Lubricating eye drops
Medical shears/ scissors	Any prescription medications
Triangle dressing	Antacids (Calcium Carbonate)
ACE adhesive wrap	Burn Cream (Hydrogel)
CPR mask/ breathing barrier	
Rolled gauze (3 or 4 inch)	
Eye patch	
Standard oral thermometer	
Irrigation syringe	
Eyewash solution	
First aid manual	
Headlamp	
Sharpie pen	
Aloe vera gel	
Sunscreen	
Bug Spray	

Additional items to consider	
Equipment	Medicines
Cold pack	Antiseptic solution (Iodine/ benzalkonium chloride)
Hot pack	Glucose tablets
Tampons, pads	Calamine lotion
Duct tape	Insect Sting stick
Pocket knife/ scalpel	Oral Rehydration salts (Pedialyte)
Splint (SAM Splint)	Smelling salts
Liquid bandage	Activated Charcoal
Safety pins	Antiemetics (dissolving Meclizine tablets)
Butterfly sutures	Poison Ivy oil remover
Hydrogel based pads (Glacier gel)	
Vaseline based gauze (Tefla pads)	
Pealess whistle	
Waterproof container	
Wet wipes	
Notebook with waterproof pencil/pen	
Cotton Swabs	
Blister pads (Moleskin)	
Hand sanitizer	
Sewing needle	
Chapstick	
Cotton balls	
Rope or other lashing	
Bottled water	
Small mirror	Chewable bismuth salt tablets
Magnifying glass	Menthol-based pain cream
Israeli bandage	Decongestants (Pseudoephedrine)
Hemostatic dressing (Quikclot gauze/ ChitoSAM)	Non-drowsy antihistamines (Cetirizine, Loratadine)
Snack/protein bar	Aquaphor
Zip ties	Non-drowsy motion sickness medication (Dimenhydrinate)
Coban Tape/ leukotape	
Needle-nose pliers with wire cutters	
Tourniquet	
Solar charger for phone	
Collapsible water basin	
Water filter	

References:

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