

Recommended Contents of Wilderness First Aid Kits

Article Summary and Conclusions

This article provided by [High Country Explorations](#) is based on extensive research of wilderness first aid kits recommended by experts in the field. My research included personal chats with medical experts, magazine articles on the subject from recreational publications, lists on the Internet, and current wilderness first aid books. I will eventually develop an up-to-date bibliography of the expert sources consulted for this article. In general terms I found that emergency medical experts recommend a surprising number and variety of items. Furthermore, the experts do not agree with each other on the specific items. Instead, most experts provide their own favorite list of first aid items and then claim that this is a personal matter and each person should decide for him or herself. I recommend you follow this advice. To assist in this task, I have provided below (after one more introductory paragraph) a comprehensive list of most of the first aid items recommended by the experts.

First Aid Kit Decision Factors

Here are most of the factors that will determine what goes into a wilderness first aid kit:

- Duration of the trip and distance from the road head
- Size, experience and composition of the group.
- Types of medical risks likely to be encountered
- Individual risk tolerances
- Medical and first aid training available in the group
- Cost and availability of priority first aid supplies
- Willingness to add significant weight to your pack.

If you don't want to go through a demanding and complex decision process using the very detailed list provided below, consider using a much shorter checklist. For example:

[REI Expert Advice: First Aid Checklist](#)

Comprehensive List of Recommended First Aid Supplies

Because of the sheer number of items recommended, I have broken down the list of first aid items recommended by the experts into five sections:

- Basic Tools and Equipment
- More Advanced Tools and Equipment
- Bandages and Bandaging
- Prescription Medications
- Non-prescription Medicines and Preparations.

In most cases, I list both the item and then what it is used for, if it is not obvious. Many listed items will be necessarily excluded from the normal wilderness first aid kit merely from weight and bulk considerations. I have also excluded from my list specialized items that might be carried only by those with extensive medical training. Several of the prescription and non-prescription medications are likely outdated, but the items listed should give a good sense of what is being recommended. Without further introduction, here is what the experts have to recommend.

Basic Tools and Equipment

Organizer bag

Pamphlets, photocopied information or cards on specialized first aid items: For example, dealing with life threatening traumatic injuries; caring for children in the wilderness

Pencil and paper (for writing medical instructions and symptoms)

Safety pins (assortment)

Razor blade

Tweezers

Magnifying glass

Matches and lighter

Spare sunglasses

Standard Thermometer (for fevers, heatstroke)

Dental floss

Plastic tooth picks

Tongue depressors

More Advanced First Aid Tools and Equipment

Detailed wilderness oriented first aid book for study purposes

Comprehensive wilderness first aid manual for carrying in wilderness

Accident Report Forms

Hypothermia Thermometer (86-100 degrees Fahrenheit)

Mylar space blanket (for hypothermia, shock)

Scalpel

Hemostat (clamp)

Scissors

Surgical scissors (for cutting tape, gauze, clothes)

Surgical scrub brush

Sewing needle and thread (for suturing wounds)

Suturing kit

Splinter forceps/puller

Hot water bottle (for hypothermia, shock)

Cold pack/Instant Ice pack (for sprains and strains)

Eye washing cup

Oxygen bottle, tubing and mask

IV rehydration kit

Bladder catheter kit

Wax stick (for dental kit)

Temporary tooth filling repair (“Super-Dent” or “Dentemp”)

Pocket mouth to mask breather/adult oral airway (for CPR)

Blood pressure monitor

Irrigating syringe/bulb (preferably a high pressure 18-gauge syringe holding 12-20 ccs)

SAM splint kit for ankle, hand and wrist (thin aluminum frame covered with foam)

Cervical neck collar

Inflatable lower leg splint

Arm Sling (shoulder immobilizer) Cervical collar

Sawyer Extractor kit (suction device for snake bites and bee stings)

Snake bit kit

Bandages and Bandaging

Waterless hand sanitizer and cleaner: Purell
Assortment of Adhesive bandages: Band-Aids
Knuckle bandage
Butterfly wound closure strips: Steristrips
Sterile roller gauze wraps (2" - 3" - 4" sizes)
Sterile gauze pads (assortment of sizes)
Sterile gauze sponges
Non-adhesive, sterile eye pad
Large compress bandage
Triangular bandage
Safety gloves: latex or Nitrile hypoallergenic
Moleskin and Molefoam
Cloth hypoallergenic adhesive tape
Paper medical tape
Duct tape
Cotton-tip swabs (Q-tips for cleaning out wounds)
Water gel dressing: Spenco Second Skin (for blisters and burns)
Female sanitary products
Elastic (ACE) bandage (three and six inch widths)
Ankle and knee braces (elastic supports)
Arm sling

Recommended Non-Prescription Medicines and Preparations

Waterless, anti-bacterial hand cleaner: Purell (60% ethyl alcohol in glycerin-like base)
Anti-microbial solutions, wipes, swabs (Povidone-Iodine solution and wipes (Betadine, Hibiclens surgical scrub) (for cleaning and sanitizing more serious wounds)
Alcohol swabs and/or bottle of Isopropyl alcohol
Sterile saline solution for wound irrigation
Hydrogen peroxide (for cleaning wounds)
Glucose Paste (for wound care)
Topical anesthetic: Dibucaine (Nupercainal) Ointment (1%) (relief from local pain and discomfort)
Double or Triple Antibiotic Ointment (for treating and preventing infection)

Analgesics to alleviating mild pain: Acetaminophen, ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil, Nupren), and aspirin

Ibuprofen (Relief from fever, inflammation and pain)

Otic drops (for ear pain)

Aloe Vera Gel (100%) (to promote healing of skin rashes and abrasions)

Zinc Oxide ointment

Petroleum Jelly (multi-purpose lubricant, especially for skin abrasions and blister prevention)

Oral Antihistamine for Allergies (Benadryl) (for bee stings, insect bites, allergies and sleeplessness)

Oral Antihistamine-Decongestant: Actifed, Nyquil, Dristan (for relief of colds and sinus infections)

Hydrocortisone ointment or cream (for itching, allergic skin)

Tetrahydrozoline ophthalmic drops (for eye irritation)

Medicated cough drops

Electrolyte replacement tablets or powdered sports drink mix (for dehydration)

Table salt or salt tablets (for dehydration)

UV water purifier; chlorine dioxide tablets; 2% tincture of iodine (useful for purifying water and sanitizing and irrigating wounds)

Tincture of Benzoin (for making tape stick better, especially for blister prone areas)

H₂ Blockers (Anti-acid): Meclizine, Tagament, Pepcid, Zantac, Dimacid, Malanta, PeptoBismal, RioPan Plus, Rhizinate (licorice), ginger tablets (for nausea, vomiting, gas and acidic stomach)

Diarrhea medication (Diamode; Diasorb; Lomotil, Imodium A-D; Kaopectate II; Maalox Anti-Diarrheal; Bactrim; Septra DS)

Bisacodyl (for constipation)

Ammonia Inhalants (stimulant)

Silver sulfadiazine cream (Silvadene)(for second degree burns)

Baking Soda (for neutralizing insect bites and rehydration)

Calamine lotion (for skin rashes)

Antifungal cream: Clotrimazole, Micronazole, Tinactin (for fungal infections)

Foot powder (for dryness and prevention of infections)

Eye drops (for dry and irritated eyes)

Oil of cloves (for toothache)
Sunscreen with at least SPF15 protection
Lip Balm with SPF protection
Insect Repellent
Instant glucose syrup (for quick energy pickup)

Recommended Prescription Medications

[Note: many of the examples of medications might no longer be available or have been replaced by more effective drugs.]

Emergency supply of regularly prescribed personal medications
Antihistamines for Motion/sea sickness: Scopolamine patches; Meclizine; Marezine;
Dramamine; Ginger root (can also be used to treat allergies)
Injectable epinephrine: Epi-Pen or Ana-Kit or Tubex (for anaphylaxis - severe allergic reactions to food, drugs and especially to bee stings)
Analgesics to alleviate strong pain: Acetaminophen (Tylenol) or aspirin with codeine;
Darvon; Endocet;
Analgesics to alleviate severe pain: Morphine; Meperidine (Demerol)
Local Injectable Anesthetics—one percent solutions: Lidocaine; Xylocaine
Broad-spectrum antibiotic (for acute respiratory, urinary or intestinal infections)
Antibiotics: Amoxicillin, Augmentin (penicillin), Cephalexin, Erythromycin (for bacterial infections)
Sodium sulfacetamide (for bacterial infection in eye)
Dexedrine (for exhaustion)
Nitroglycerin tablets or ointment (for heart conditions like angina)

A Few Definitions

"Antibiotic" was originally used to refer only to substances extracted from a fungus or other microorganism, but has come to also include the many synthetic and semi-synthetic drugs that have antibacterial effects. Antibiotics can help succeed in curing many illnesses.

Antiseptics are antimicrobial substances that are applied to living tissue/skin to reduce the possibility of infection, sepsis, or putrefaction. They should generally be distinguished from antibiotics that destroy bacteria within the body, and from disinfectants, which destroy microorganisms found on non-living objects.

Antibacterials are antiseptics that only act against bacteria.