

A Well-Stocked First Aid Kit

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A well-stocked first-aid kit is essential for dealing with a number of injuries and other events. Assemble your kit so that it includes what you need to treat the following:

Cuts and Scrapes

Any cut on the body that is gaping open requires medical attention. If stitches are needed, they should be placed as soon as possible after the injury.

Apply direct pressure with **clean gauze** or a cloth to a wound that is bleeding. Persistent bleeding requires immediate medical attention.

A scrape on the knees or elbows should be cleaned with **soap**, or antibacterial soap if you wish. Another option is rubbing alcohol or hydrogen peroxide, although these can sting when applied to the wound, and younger children may not appreciate this. Generally, these wounds can be left open, but if your child can't resist picking at crusting skin, a **bandage** can be useful. In addition, once a wound has been cleaned, you could elect to apply a nonprescription **antibiotic ointment** before bandaging.

Look for symptoms of infection in the following days, such as increasing redness, pain, fever, or oozing pus.

You, or your child, should get a tetanus shot if one has not been administered in the past five years.

Sprains and Strains

A child with a leg injury who cannot stand or walk alone requires medical attention. Rapid swelling over a joint or having body parts that are out of alignment (not straight) also should be evaluated on the day of the injury.

A twisted ankle always hurts more the next day. Try to apply the following measures:

- **Ice** the affected area as soon as possible. Use crushed ice in a plastic bag, or a bag of frozen vegetables can be sacrificed for this purpose. Apply ice for at least 15 minutes out of every hour following the injury.
- Keep the ankle elevated above the level of the heart. This is best accomplished by lying down and placing your ankle on a stack of towels (be sure the knee is supported).
- Wrap an **Ace (elastic) bandage** around the ankle to prevent further swelling.
- Stay off the ankle, and if pain control is needed, take **ibuprofen**.

Burns and Sunburns

Any burn that causes the skin to blister and peel requires medical attention.

Minor sunburn will cause the skin to turn pink or red. Sunburn can often be painful, and this can be relieved with the use of cool compresses (a cool wet washcloth), **ibuprofen**, and the application of **1 percent hydrocortisone cream**, available over the counter. Next time, don't forget to apply sun-block often.

Bites and Stings

Animal (pet) and human bites that break the skin should be cleaned with lots of soap and water. Have you had a recent tetanus shot? Has your pet been vaccinated against rabies?

Insect bites and stings (mosquitoes, spiders, bees) can cause redness, swelling, and itching surrounding the area of the “bite.” Immediate medical attention is required if there is any difficulty in breathing, shortness of breath, or facial swelling after a sting.

If a “stinger” is visible on the skin, remove it by scraping. Apply an **icepack** to the area and give **an antihistamine (such as Benadryl)** by mouth to relieve itching and swelling. Continue the antihistamine for a few days until the swelling improves. In addition, a paste made from water and baking soda or a nonprescription steroid cream such as 1 percent **hydrocortisone** can be applied to the affected skin.

Because “bites” cause bacteria to be introduced underneath the skin, infection is a possibility. See your doctor if fever develops or if red streaks form around the wound or pus appears.