

## THE IMPORTANCE OF FIRST-AID

While much of first-aid training focuses on life-threatening situations, more attention is needed on the common, everyday injuries. While CPR skills are essential, so is knowing how to make and use a first-aid kit. You may never give CPR, but you will certainly help those with less severe injuries.

OSHA has moved away from delineating what should be in a first-aid kit. Instead, they place the onus back on the individual companies to decide (and defend) what they place in their first-aid kits. The American National Standards Institute (ANSI) recently made some revisions to its requirements for workplace first-aid kits. It requires absorbent compresses, adhesive bandages, adhesive tape, antiseptic, burn treatment, medical exam gloves, sterile pads, and triangular bandages. It recommends bandage compresses, eye coverings, eyewash, cold packs, and roller bandages.

Alton Thygerson, of the National Safety Council's First-Aid Institute, suggests the following 20 items as essential elements in a first-aid kit, and we agree:

1. **Tweezers** remove splinters, ticks and small objects from a wound. To use: Grasp the foreign body as close to the skin surface as possible. Gently pull away from the skin with steady pressure.
2. **A Large Safety Pin** is one of the most versatile first-aid tools you can use to remove a splinter or embedded foreign body. You can also secure a bandage, help fasten an arm sling, or pop or drain a blister. Before using a safety pin to drain a blister, sterilize it with rubbing alcohol or pass it through a match flame.
3. **Mouth-to-Barrier Devices** with either a face mask with a one-way valve or a disposable face shield to protect you against disease during rescue breathing. Personal protective equipment is especially important in a car kit because you're more likely to encounter a stranger who is severely bleeding or needs resuscitation.
4. **Disposable Medical-Grade Exam Gloves** protect you against bloodborne diseases, including hepatitis B virus (HBV) and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). Use gloves in situations involving blood or other body fluids. Store gloves in a plastic bag or empty film canister.
5. **Ice Bags** can effectively treat orthopedic injuries, such as dislocations, bruises, and strains of muscles and joints. Apply an ice pack to the injured area for 20 to 30 minutes every 2 to 3 hours during the first 24 to 48 hours.
6. **Resealable Plastic Bags** make excellent ice packs and improvise other first-aid supplies. For an ice pack, double-bag (one inside another) ice or snow. Apply one layer of a wet cloth over the injury. Place the ice pack on top. Use an elastic bandage to hold in place. For amputation care, place the amputated part in the bag on a bed of ice. Don't bury the part in ice.
7. **A Thermometer** measures body temperature. (You can also use the back of your hand to feel someone's forehead.)
8. **Gauze Pads** (4x4) control bleeding, prevent infection and contamination, and absorb blood and other drainage. To stop bleeding, place a sterile gauze pad over the entire wound. Apply direct pressure with your fingers or palm.
9. **Adhesive-Strip Bandages**, in assorted sizes, are handy for small cuts, abrasions and shallow wounds. You can also use adhesive tape with gauze pads to cover wounds.

10. **A Conforming Self-Adhering Roller Bandage** (4½ width) holds a compression, dressing or splint in place. The slightly elastic, gauze-like material clings to itself so it can wrap around almost any body part.
11. **Scissors** cut bandages or clothing. Blunt-tip scissors prevent injury while cutting next to the skin.
12. **Elastic Roller Bandages** (3-inch width) are used to apply compression, which prevents swelling from a sprain, strain, or bruise.
13. **Adhesive Tape** (1½-inch width) helps hold a splint and secures roller bandages and small dressings. For those allergic to adhesive tape, use paper or special dermatological tape.
14. **Duct Tape** prevents blisters, holds a splint in place, and can substitute as a sling. For blisters apply a piece of silver aluminum duct tape or use moleskin with a hole cut out of the middle, secured by tape.
15. **Antibiotic Ointment** protects against bacteria and prevents infection of minor cuts, abrasions, and burns.
16. **Calamine Lotion** helps stop itching and works as a drying agent for poison ivy, oak, sumac, and skin rashes.
17. **Hydrocortisone Cream** (1 percent) relieves minor inflammation, skin irritation, and itching.
18. **Aspirin or Ibuprofen** reduces pain, swelling and fever. Acetaminophen reduces pain and fever, but not swelling, and should be used for children instead of aspirin.
19. **Antihistamines** block the action of histamine, thus preventing or alleviating the major symptoms of an allergic reaction.
20. **Emergency Blanket** made of Mylar can reduce body heat loss.