

Stocking a first-aid kit

Easy · 30 min to build · Buy ready-made or build from drugstore supplies

Keep one kit at home and one in the car, somewhere easy to grab. The Red Cross list covers the core: 25 assorted bandages, gauze pads and rolls, tape, antibiotic and hydrocortisone ointment, antiseptic wipes, nonlatex gloves, a cold pack, tweezers, a thermometer and an emergency blanket. Add pain relievers, your own medicines, a flashlight, and a card with emergency numbers and insurance info. Check expiration dates a couple of times a year and mark the date you last used it.

YOU'LL NEED

- ☐ A ready-made kit or a sturdy, waterproof box
- ☐ The checklist below
- ☐ A marker for the date

WHAT TO KNOW

- 1 **Buy a kit or build one.** Drugstores sell them, and some are made for hiking, camping or boating.
- 2 **Keep one at home and one in your car, and find out where the kits are at work.** Store them somewhere easy to reach but away from young children.
- 3 **Stock the Red Cross basics, listed below.** Its list is sized for a family of four, so a smaller amount is fine for one person.
- 4 **Add medicines: pain relievers like acetaminophen or ibuprofen, an antihistamine, antacids, anti-diarrhea medicine, and any personal medicines that don't need refrigeration.** If a doctor prescribed an epinephrine auto-injector, keep one in the kit.
- 5 **Add emergency items: a small waterproof flashlight with extra batteries, a notepad and pen, and your health insurance member and phone numbers.**
- 6 **Write an emergency numbers card: your doctor, local emergency services, roadside assistance, and Poison Control at 1-800-222-1222.**
- 7 **Check it regularly.** Test the flashlight, replace anything expired or used up, and mark the kit with the date you last used it. Kits can go years between uses.

Watch out A kit is for small injuries. If an injury looks serious, skip the kit and call 911. See When to call 911.

DAD NOTE Put one in the car today. You'll use it more than you think.

Full lesson: aptkeys.com/body/first-aid-basics/stocking-a-first-aid-kit/

Checked October 2, 2026. Sources: American Red Cross; Mayo Clinic; Ready.gov (FEMA); 911.gov; Poison Control (National Capital Poison Center).