

# FAMILY FIRST AID

WHAT TO ALWAYS  
KEEP IN YOUR HOME  
MEDICINE CABINET

**RESILIENT**  
STRATEGIES  
SPECIAL REPORT

# FAMILY FIRST AID

**What to ALWAYS Keep in Your Home  
Medicine Cabinet**

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**RESILIENT**  
STRATEGIES

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Often when we think about resiliency and long-term sustainability strategies, we look for methods and techniques not dependent on others.

Examples might be producing our own foods instead of shopping at the grocery store or producing our own electricity instead of depending on the utility company to deliver it.

These certainly are important considerations aimed at ensuring survival regardless of what the future may hold.

However, one subject that often doesn't get the attention it deserves is medical treatment. After all, emergency medical situations are bound to happen.

As society stands right now, it is simple enough to go to the doctor or hospital for injuries. Society has become dependent on these medical professionals to administer care regardless of the severity of an injury or illness.

There's absolutely nothing wrong with taking advantage of experienced medical personnel to combat various ailments but a truly resilient lifestyle is best suited by moving away from the standardized model of medicine and focusing on at-home care whenever possible.

This doesn't mean that everybody should run out and whittle away their life savings taking medical classes. What it does mean is that we should take an honest inventory of our knowledge and first aid skills to ensure the safety of our loved ones in any circumstance.

Understanding first aid practices isn't a skill reserved solely for a post-catastrophic world or societal collapse.

**First aid skills can save your life, your family member's lives, and the lives of community members now. Accidents happen all the time and timely administration of first aid can literally mean the difference between life and death in many situations.**

Maybe you live in a rural area where medical treatment in the best of times could be an hour away. When you add to that the complications caused by bad weather or a natural disaster, the response time for emergency personnel can be inadequate at best.

Of course, there's always the possibility that hospitals, doctors, and emergency medical personnel as we know it will cease to exist altogether.

Regardless of the circumstances, the careful administration of first aid and medical treatment at home may become the only viable option.

There are many facets to successfully adopting first aid techniques in your family's sustainability plan.

Having the proper materials is important, as is proper training in how to use materials and equipment effectively.

In this report, we will take a look at what first aid is (and what it isn't), training recommendations, materials and equipment that every family should have for administering basic medical care.

We will also look at sharing this knowledge with others in your family and your community. The goal is to add an additional layer of resiliency by understanding the importance of first aid for long-term survival.

## What is First Aid?

To better understand what first aid is, let's discuss what first aid is not.

First aid is not advanced medical treatment. Although having an understanding of more advanced medical practices is certainly a helpful asset, it is by no means required for many injuries.

Even if an injury is ultimately beyond the scope of your experience, training, and supplies, first aid is still useful to prevent further damage while waiting for appropriate medical treatment.

## Why is first aid so important?

Let's look at some statistics. Each year over 1 million people in the United States die from some form of heart disease. About one third of these people die from sudden cardiac arrest.

First aid techniques can often save the lives of people who suddenly fall victim to heart failure.

Heart disease is the number one cause of death in the country.

Another leading cause of death is unintentional injury. Well over 100,000 Americans die from unintentional injuries each year and a staggering 25 million are disabled as a result of their injuries.

Can first aid save all of these people? Of course not – but considering how many people are not properly trained in first aid techniques it begs the question of how much lower these statistics might be if more first responders were knowledgeable in basic medical treatment.

Let's not be a statistic – our choice to live a resilient lifestyle dictates that we understand how to address medical emergencies when and where they occur.

Advanced care such as stitches and splinting fractures is considered advanced medical care. These are tactics that should be learned but it is not within the scope of first aid.

If doctors and hospitals are no longer available, you may be responsible for administering advanced treatments but a patient must be stabilized and their condition accurately assessed before any other actions are taken.

We will define first aid as emergency care or treatment that is given to an ill or injured person before trained medical staff arrives.

If trained medical staff will not be arriving at all then you may be forced to switch roles and become a caregiver. During an emergency, however, this should not be your concern. Your concern should rest solely on stabilizing the patient and assessing immediate threats to that individual's health and well-being as a result of injury or illness.



Here are some examples of common situations that may require first aid and typical treatment options that help to mitigate further injury or complications:

- **Bleeding wounds and other lacerations** – Depending on the severity of the bleeding and its location, applying firm pressure to the immediate area will aid in the clotting process. If the bleeding is arterial, then a tourniquet may be required to prevent life-threatening blood loss.
- **Nosebleeds** – A nosebleed is very rarely a life-threatening ailment. The exception is when the patient is a hemophiliac (a “bleeder”); a person unable to clot damaged blood vessels. Typically, pinching the nose shut is all that’s required to stop a nosebleed.
- **Burns** – Burns are typically categorized into first, second, or third degree classifications depending on the severity. First-degree burns typically do not require any special treatment while a third degree burn should be immediately wrapped to prevent the risk of serious infection. Burn creams do nothing for extremely severe burns and should be avoided.
- **Bites** – Bee stings and spider bites are probably the most common biting injuries encountered during first aid treatment. These injuries are usually not serious but complications can arise because of allergic reactions. This condition is known as anaphylaxis and is deadly if left untreated. Snakebites can be more serious. The bite from a venomous snake can kill a human quickly. Wrapping the wound and keeping the patient relatively still will help to slow the spread of venom throughout the body.
- **Sudden collapse** – A person may collapse for a number of reasons including respiratory distress, choking, or cardiac arrest among others. One of the staples of first aid treatment is commonly referred to as ABC – airway, breathing, and circulation. Assessing the ABCs of a patient can often shed light on the reasons for the collapse and appropriate action can be taken.

- **Car accidents** – Any accident involving a vehicle can often result in serious injuries including injuries to the spinal column. These victims should not be moved until appropriate equipment is available to stabilize the spinal column. Many basic first aid techniques can be administered while the victim is still in the vehicle.

This is only a small sampling of the thousands of possible injuries you may encounter.

Fortunately, the techniques for administering proper first aid remain relatively unchanged throughout most of these situations. It's a good idea to enroll in various first aid classes to increase your knowledge and training in various techniques.

## **DO THIS:**

First aid is responding to the immediate needs of an injured or sick individual. Understanding basic first aid concepts can save a person's life.

## **The Importance of Proper First Aid Training**

There have been many documented cases where people with good intentions have actually created more harm to a victim by trying to assist in a medical emergency without proper training.

First aid guidelines are very specific for reason. When you approach an injured person, you have no idea what the extent of their injuries might be and every precaution should be taken until the source of the injury has been positively identified.

For example, moving an individual who may have some sort of spinal injury could make the injury worse and even result in permanent paralysis. Any victim who has even the slightest chance of spinal injury should not be moved without equipment designed to stabilize the spinal column.

If you do not have any experience in first aid techniques, there are tons of free or low-cost classes available.

Every adult in your family should have at least basic first aid training and more advanced techniques are even better.

Training is important for a couple of reasons.

First aid knowledge has been proven to save lives. The training also provides first responders with a level of confidence not found in people without first aid training. This extra confidence often helps to mitigate the onset of panic.



If you have never seen an injured person with a hysterical loved one by their side, it is an extremely stressful situation. Most people experienced in first aid training resort to their training first and let their emotions take a backseat to the immediate issue of addressing the victim's needs.

Training increases your response time during an emergency. A difference of only a few minutes can affect whether a victim survives or succumbs to their injuries.

Without oxygen, the brain dies within six minutes. Arterial bleeding can result in death within five minutes. Lacerations can quickly become infected. Shock can even lead to death relatively quickly if not managed properly.

By knowing what to do in a given situation before it occurs, you will be able to make sound judgments quickly that can have a positive impact on the health of the victim.

## **DO THIS:**

If you do not have any first aid training, courses are available in most communities. Take as many as you can.

## **Creating a Personalized First Aid Kit**

Creating a first aid kit is something that should not be taken lightly. It truly is a personalized solution that represents the equipment you are trained to use and the potential situations you are likely to encounter.

Creating the perfect first aid kit begins by assessing your first aid knowledge and that of your family members.

For instance, it doesn't make sense to have equipment in your kit that no one knows how to use (there are exceptions to this). Location also plays a role in the contents of your first aid kit.

Procuring and storing anti-venom for a king cobra bite doesn't make much sense in the United States unless you happen to have one as a pet or live near a zoo.

It would be nice to have equipment for every imaginable injury but it is simply not practical due to size constraints.

I cannot stress enough the importance of assessing your individual first aid training and filling in any gaps whenever possible.

This will be beneficial to your family and other members of your community if professional medical assistance is unavailable. Local Red Cross chapters often hold training sessions from basic first aid through specialized training for wilderness survival and other less common, but equally important, situations.

Often when people think of first aid kits, they think of the neatly packaged red zipper bags that can be purchased at a variety of retailers nationwide. These kits are inexpensive but they are also ineffective.

Look at the package of one of those kits if you are doubtful. Typically, they will have a description stating their use for cuts and scrapes, minor burns, and pain or swelling.

These ailments are uncomfortable but typically not life-threatening.

A kit like this will mostly consist of various size bandages, ointment, alcohol pads, and maybe some burn cream. Unfortunately, this will not get you very far if medical attention is hours away or if it won't be coming at all.



Recently, there have been more companies selling specialized first aid kits that offer much more than the basic one described above.

This is certainly a better option and will typically include helpful items such as an assortment of medications (OTC meds such as painkillers and antihistamines), gauze dressings, irrigation syringes, a clotting compound, and CPR accessories such as face shields or mouthpieces.

Advanced kits like this are a huge step up from the basic ones sold at the local drugstore or big-box retailers.

Despite these improvements, we need more than this to become truly resilient. The only way to accomplish this is to create your own first aid kit. This ensures your kit has everything your family needs to address anticipated situations and the unexpected alike.

## **DO THIS:**

Assessing individual needs and creating a customized first aid kit is a big step forward in sustainable medical care.

## **First Aid Kit Suggested Materials List**

We are about to cover a large list of items that should be in just about every first aid kit.

**By no means is this list meant to be all-inclusive.**

In addition to comparing it with other lists, you should take into consideration any special medical needs that may be required for you or a member of your family.



- **Sterile gauze pads** – Gauze should be available in a variety of sizes and has many uses including stopping bleeding and dressing wounds.
- **Roll bandages** – Also used to dress wounds and can be cut to size as needed.
- **Compression bandages** – Sometimes referred to as Ace bandages, these can be used to treat sprained joints. Consider having a couple of different sizes to effectively wrap various joints.
- **Band-Aids** – These self-adhesive bandages are useful for addressing minor wounds to prevent exposure and possible infection.
- **Butterfly bandages** – Adhesive strips that can be used to close lacerations.
- **Medical tape** – Tape has many uses in first aid including dressing wounds, securing bandages, and holding medical equipment in place.
- **Triangular bandages** – These are used to immobilize dislocations and fractures.
- **Q-tips** – These are commonly used to clean wounds and to apply ointments or salves.
- **Sharp scissors** – Shears can be used to cut bandages or victims clothing.
- **Wooden tongue depressors** – Useful for checking for throat obstructions and can also be used to split small fractures.
- **Tweezers** – Many uses including splinter removal. Believe it or not, splinters can turn into serious infections if left untreated.
- **Sewing needle** – These can be used to dislodge foreign matter from underneath the skin.
- **Small flashlight** – A small, handheld pen style flashlight can be held in the mouth to provide light while working and to examine body orifices.
- **Oral thermometer** – Thermometers quickly diagnose fevers which could be a symptom of other, more serious conditions.

- Irrigation syringe – Alternatively, you can also use a squeeze bottle. Either way it should be filled with sterile water and can be used to clean debris and excess bodily fluids out of wounds.
- Splinting material – Available in a variety of materials, splinting material can usually be cut to size and secured to a limb for immobilizing dislocations and fractures.
- Emergency blanket – These are useful in cold weather or when serious injury has caused the victim to go into shock. Keeping a victim warm prevents shock from becoming more serious.
- Instant hot/cold packs – Having a few of each of these can help alleviate swelling and pain associated with muscle strain.
- Plastic bags – Sealable plastic bags can be used to dispose of contaminated medical waste. They can also be used as makeshift irrigation devices by poking a hole in a corner.
- Eye solution – A saline-based eye solution helps to irrigate debris from the eye and prevent further contamination.
- Antibacterial soap – Used to clean wounds, your hands, and anything else that gets dirty or contaminated. Items that have been potentially contaminated by bodily fluids should further be sterilized using Betadine, alcohol, or heat.
- Antiseptic solution – Betadine comes in liquid form and on pre-saturated pads and can be used to sterilize the area around the wound. It can also be used to purify small amounts of water for consumption.
- Antibiotic ointment – This is commonly used to reduce the risk of infection to open wounds by placing it on and around the wound prior to bandaging.
- Hydrocortisone cream – This cream is a topical steroid that helps the body recover from insect bites or stings and minor rashes.
- Burn gel – The painkilling properties of these topical gels can help to alleviate pain caused by burned skin.
- Ibuprofen – Commonly marketed as Motrin, ibuprofen is an anti-inflammatory and analgesic.

- **Antihistamine tablets** – Products such as Benadryl can alleviate the symptoms associated with mild allergic reactions and skin irritations.
- **QuikClot** – A blood clotting powder such as QuikClot can be used to help slow down or stop severe bleeding.
- **Pen and paper** – These are used to record a victim’s vital signs. This information can be used to keep track of progress or deterioration and also given to professional medical staff if and when they do arrive.
- **Hand sanitizer** – This can be used to clean your hands when water is not available. Since most of them are alcohol-based, refrain from using them in open wounds whenever possible as this will be extremely uncomfortable for the victim.
- **Superglue** – Superglue has many uses in a first aid setting. It can be used as an invisible bandage for small cuts, blisters, and abrasions. It acts as a waterproof bandage for smaller lacerations.

This list represents the bare minimum that every kit should include. The next section represents items that are not necessary for basic first aid but could become invaluable in a more serious situation.

#### *Useful Add-ons –*

- **Burn kit** – Our basic list above include some basic equipment for addressing burns but for a more complete solution, consider adding a purpose built burn kit. These are more appropriate for treating very serious burns or when burns are located on multiple areas of the body.
- **Snakebite kit** – Typically, these kits include an extractor pump designed to pull venom from pooled areas in the body. It is **not** effective at extracting venom that has already entered the circulatory system.
- **Israeli Battle Dressing** – These dressings are specially designed to be ultraportable and provide excellent treatment for serious hemorrhaging wounds.

- Stethoscope – These can be used to verify breathing and heart-beat as well as to diagnose some respiratory issues.
- Cervical collar – These are designed to immobilize the neck. One of these should be placed on a victim any time there is a possibility of neck, back, or spine injury to avoid further damage and possible paralysis.
- Foldable stretcher – The folding varieties are relatively small and can be used to carry victims unable to walk on their own. Alternatively, a makeshift stretcher can usually be made from materials that are lying around.
- Blood pressure cuff – These are useful for quickly determining a victim's blood pressure. Drops in blood pressure without visible hemorrhaging may point to internal bleeding or another problem.
- Sutures – These are used to close serious wounds.
- Locking forceps – These can be used during suturing and also can stop hemorrhaging blood vessels.
- Automated External Defibrillator (AED) – These battery-operated units are very simple to use and can restart a failed heart during cardiac arrest.
- Scalpel – A surgical grade scalpel can be used for minor surgery or to remove excess tissue.

Now our first aid kit is starting to show promise.

If you take the time to assemble everything just listed (and learn how to use it if necessary), you possess a formidable tool for medical treatment at home.



Next, we will look at some common medications that should be included as well. Keep in mind that some of these medications are OTC like the ibuprofen already mentioned while others require a doctor's prescription.

For prescription medications, many doctors are willing to prescribe extra medication for your first aid kit if you explain your intentions first. This will not include controlled substances such as opioid-based painkillers or other regulated medications.

- Asthma inhalers – If you or someone in your family suffers from asthma, you probably already have quite a few of these lying around. Be sure to put at least one or two into your first aid kit and leave them there.
- Nitroglycerin – This is commonly prescribed as a treatment for patients with heart conditions.
- Aspirin – In addition to being an effective OTC painkiller, aspirin is also used to treat certain heart conditions.
- Sugar pills – These can be administered to quickly bring up the blood sugar of a diabetic patient.
- Insulin – If a diabetic lives in your house, make sure your kit includes a good supply of insulin and needles to administer it.
- Imodium – Imodium or similar is often used to treat diarrhea. Although diarrhea may seem like more of an inconvenience, it can actually lead to severe dehydration if left unchecked.
- EpiPen – These are commonly prescribed to individuals prone to anaphylactic reactions from insect stings or certain foods. Even if you are not aware of a severe allergy within your family, having an EpiPen can save a life if someone experiences a severe reaction unexpectedly.

You'll want to include any specific medications required by you or your family in your kit as well.

Talk to your doctor about getting an extra prescription that can be placed in your first aid kit. The last thing you want to be doing is frantically searching for a necessary medication during an emergency situation.

Although it is illegal for a doctor to prescribe a controlled substance without an immediate need, antibiotics are not as strictly regulated. An extra stash of antibiotics could be a literal lifesaver if infection becomes serious.

Cephalexin (commonly marketed as Keflex) is an antibiotic that is especially good at treating staph infections that may be contracted after a serious laceration or puncture wound.

The last important component of any first aid kit is the case or bag that you keep it in.

If you were to follow this list completely you would need a rather large bag to carry everything. Whatever you choose to use, make sure it is durable and closes securely. You definitely don't want the contents of your first aid kit spilling all over the place during an emergency.



The ideal container will be water proof or at least water resistant.

Many of the items contained within the kit are sensitive to water and can be rendered useless if exposed to wet conditions. You can buy specially built duffel bags designed for military use that have a waterproof liner built-in. These can be expensive but definitely not as expensive as your investment in first aid equipment and gear.

Just like any other tool you rely on, your first aid kit requires periodic maintenance.

Maintenance of your kit includes taking a semiannual inventory and checking the expiration dates of any items that cannot be stored indefinitely.

Inventory is important in case someone grabs a piece of gear from the kit and forgets to replace it. By periodically checking the contents, you can be assured that the entire kit is available when called upon.

Some items, especially medications, can only be stored for a limited amount of time before they should be replaced. While checking your inventory, make notes of any expiration dates and write them on an index card that can be stored in the kit for quick reference.

If you know a certain medication will expire before your next inspection, take the initiative and replace it ahead of time. Antibiotics do not store very well, as an example, and their effectiveness is diminished greatly once the expiration period has been reached.

Have other family members help you do inventory so they can also become familiar with the contents of the kit and the potential uses for each item.

If you assemble the kit yourself, other family members may not be aware of the kit's content which greatly diminishes the usefulness of the first aid kit in an emergency.

## DO THIS:

Although this list is not meant to be all-inclusive, a kit containing these items provides a lot of versatility. Many common injuries can be addressed successfully using these items. Just make sure you know how to use everything you put in the kit.

### Kit Location

**The location of your first aid kit is almost as important as the contents of it.**

A first aid kit that is not easily accessible is practically useless. Your primary first aid kit should be located in a central area of your home and the location should be known to every family member.

If your budget allows, you should also consider creating multiple kits.

Not every first aid kit needs to be as large or complete as the primary kit, but each “satellite” kit should afford basic first aid items such as bandages and antiseptic solution.

Those readily available kits I mentioned at the beginning of this report could be an affordable option. These smaller kits can be placed in vehicles, in the garage, or anywhere else where people spend a lot of time and could get injured.

These portable first aid kits are also much easier to transport if an accident happens in a more remote location where the primary kit may not be available.

## **DO THIS:**

Make sure your first aid kit(s) are easily accessible at all times. Consider having additional kits stored in your vehicles and other places where people are likely to get injured.

### **Teaching Others about First Aid**

The value of first aid is somewhat reduced when you are the only person familiar with the many techniques and methods used in properly administering care.

Fortunately, this is easily changed by sharing your knowledge with others and creating a more resilient household and community.

It starts with your own family.

Some of the more basic techniques can be taught at home. Even children can benefit from learning basic first aid and can train in more advanced techniques as they mature. The first aid manual (which hopefully you have a copy of in your first aid kit) is an excellent resource for reviewing basic procedures.

You could also consider sending family members to first aid training courses. Most certifications last for about five years at which time you and your family should recertify to learn any new techniques that may have been introduced.

This can often be done as a family and can help to strengthen bonds in the home while learning a new and valuable skill.

You can even practice emergency situations in at home. Practice simulating an injury to see how your family reacts. These “drills” can significantly reduce response times in the event of an actual emergency.

Once your family is well-versed in first aid, consider expanding into your community.

The more people in your community that are knowledgeable and experienced in first aid techniques, the more resilient that community becomes.

It may even be worth your time to become a certified first aid instructor. This would allow you to train others and certify them upon completion of a program.

Let your neighbors know you will be holding first aid training classes and post information about it on local bulletin boards or at community events.

A community member is likely to have a home or building large enough to accommodate your training classes. If not you can always look into renting a conference room or banquet hall to hold the class. The cost to rent this facility can easily be offset by charging a small fee to each of your attendees.

However you do it, **knowledge is meant to be shared – especially when lives depend on it!**

The importance of first aid should not be underestimated. The more people trained in administering proper care to an injury, the more resilient the community becomes.

## **DO THIS:**

Training family members and your community about the importance of proper first aid training is essential to long-term sustainability.

## Business Opportunities

Although profiting from the injury or sickness of others is certainly not something we want to consider as a business opportunity, we can look at a small business venture that helps strengthen the community.

Creating first aid kits that can be sold to others is an excellent way to generate a part-time income from your knowledge of first aid.



By purchasing supplies in bulk, you could create a number of first aid kits that could be marketed to the community as an all-inclusive solution. By pointing out deficiencies in the commercially available kits available at local big-box retailers, it would be relatively easy to build value in your custom made survival first aid kits.

The sale of your first aid kits could be tied into your first aid training courses if you choose to hold them in your community. Once people are more comfortable with administering first aid, they are much more likely to purchase a kit with all the tools they will need to address injuries and illnesses at home.

Even becoming a certified first aid instructor can provide you with some additional income. By charging a small amount per class, you can be compensated for your time and materials in addition to covering any building rental fees for holding the class.

Either of these two business opportunities (or both) is great because they provide a small income stream while providing genuine value to the community that can only help to strengthen your neighbors' and friends' abilities to thrive in an uncertain future.

## Summing It Up

With the high number of casualties that occur in the United States each year, there is a very good chance that each and every one of us will encounter an emergency situation at some time in our lives.

Possessing the knowledge to make a difference and possibly save a life is an invaluable asset even today.

The number of casualties in emergency situations could easily double or triple in the wake of societal collapse or other widespread disaster situations. Your knowledge and training will become even more valuable when professional medical personnel are not available to help in serious emergency situations.

By removing our reliance on outside services to any extent possible, we know that we are doing everything we can to build resilient communities and live resilient lifestyles.

A good first aid kit and proper training are not things that should be tossed aside haphazardly.

Doctors and hospitals may not always be available; it is our responsibility to ensure we can thrive without them.



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