

Be ready to travel with family first-aid kit

By Douglas Burns

Warm weather brings open roads and summer adventures as well as misadventures. Having a simple, effective first-aid kit in the car can make a difference.

Premade kits are a good place to start. The first commercial kits were made in 1888 for railroad workers. In remote areas, a treatable injury could turn fatal because of the delay in care. The first-aid kits had clean supplies and basic medical instructions, so injured workers could be stabilized and shipped back to town. By 1898, the military was asking for first-aid kits for the Spanish-American War. The world is different today, but we still need first-aid kits when we travel.

When choosing a kit, look for one that is small and light enough that you will actually have it when you need it. The kit should be well organized. Don't dump everything out and dirty your supplies just to find a Band-Aid. In emergencies it's normal to panic a bit. Your kit should help make decisions easier.

My kit is organized by injury type. There are labels on pockets and flaps to help me find what I need. Here's a list the pocket labels and contents:

- **Stop Bleeding Fast** – Absorbent dressings (sterile material to go directly on a wound) and tape and compression bandage (clean, but nonsterile material to apply compression over the dressing), scissors to cut clothing out of the way and to cut clothing into more bandages and a pair of plastic gloves for working around blood.
- **Scrapes and Burns** – Syringe to flush out wounds, triple-antibiotic ointment to prevent infection, nonabsorbent dressings and Band-Aids, tweezers for pulling out splinters or ticks, Q-tips to remove debris from the surface of an eye or eyelid and moleskin to help prevent and treat blisters.
- **Bone and Joint Injury** – Moldable splint and a triangle bandage for making slings or splints.
- **Exposure** – Rehydration salts for heat-related illness and an emergency blanket for cold-related illness.
- **Medical** – Aspirin for possible heart attacks, sugar powder for diabetics with low blood sugar, diphenhydramine (brand name Benadryl) for allergies, acetaminophen and ibuprofen for pain.

If your family uses prescriptions, pack them along. You may need an epinephrine pen for serious allergies, an albuterol inhaler for asthma and Narcan for anyone on opiate medications.

Narcan recently was approved for over-the-counter sales. This overdose prevention medication also is available at no charge through RiverStone Health by calling 406-651-6416

With these tools you should be able to help stabilize serious injuries until more help is available.

Prevention is the best medicine. Montana had 213 traffic fatalities in 2022, including 95 unrestrained passengers and 85 deaths involving alcohol, according to the Montana Traffic Safety Annual Report. Buckle your seat belt, drive alert and sober. If you see an erratic driver, have a passenger call 911.

Have a fun and safe summer!

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