



Prevention forestalls the need to try and remember, then practice, unknown, rusty, or forgotten First Aid skills.

Best Rule: The most important part of First Aid (F/A) is prevention. It is very much easier, quicker, and less painful to prevent a problem, than to take yourself to a clinic. When you are hiking-backpacking-canoeing-skiing-etc, do you even know where the nearest clinic is, or what the telephone number is ? ! ?

Overview: First and foremost, this Educational Handout is hardly even a thumb-nail sketch of first aid. At a minimum: learn basic F/A for burns, cuts/abrasions, bruises, sun burn, poison ivy, diarrhea, hypothermia, heat stroke-heat exhaustion, shock. Learn F/A for snake-insect-spider, bee-wasp-yellow jacket stings/bites, dehydration, blisters, sprains & strains F/A.

For more and better information: consult the reference list at the end of this section, and buy or read a good book; go to a library and read a good book; take a Red Cross or other F/A Course and CPR course; take a Wilderness First Aid Course. Do not use or ingest anything from any F/A Kit that you are unfamiliar with. The main idea of this article is to give you a basic recommendation of what to carry in a F/A Kit, and a very few precautions.

Hantavirus: Hantavirus, rare in Virginia, is spread thru the dust of dried rodent urine and fecal material, which should be avoided. When bedding down in the woods or a shelter, be sure to use a ground cloth. Do not raise dust when sweeping or cleaning the shelter or outhouse. Ventilate closed structures before entering. Keep pots and eating utensils clean and covered. Don't place them, or food, on a shelter floor.

Employ good personal hygiene: wash your hands after each toilet, before preparing or eating each meal, and before hitting the sack. A small container of hand sanitizer might be very useful.

F/A Kit Contents: The contents of your F/A kit vary depending upon the time of year, the length and the strenuousness of the trip, and whether or not you are doing trail maintenance. You are the one responsible for carrying adequate F/A supplies with you; don't depend upon others. You can assemble your own, or buy a professional F/A Kit.

You can assemble you own F/A kit, or purchase one. If you purchase one, examine it with a fine toothed comb. Make sure you understand how to use each and every item in the kit. Make sure the kit contains everything you need. Add those items the F/A kit does not have that you, yourself need. your F/A kit must be personalized to your own: activities and needs and allergies and desires. Make sure that things are properly labeled in case some one else has to use your F/A kit on you. Also, don't trust your memory when you go to use the F/A kit a year or so after you assembled it. Write and enclose instructions as needed.

When you assemble a F/A kit, consult your doctor for advice. Only you and your doctor know your own individual requirements, allergies, and personal cautions to be exercised.

Quantities: When you are trying to determine the quantities of each item, like gauze pads, to put in your F/A kit: Imagine that you injure yourself Friday night and that you'll have to change dressings and cleanse the wound at least twice daily until you get home. Also, through perspiration and trail work, Band-Aids often come off and need replacement - carry plenty.

Expiration Dates: Only you know the age of the medicines and things in your F/A kit. If you, for example, take headache tablets out of their original large container and put them in a smaller container in your F/A kit, make sure that you include the expiration date of the tablets in the smaller container!

Inventory: Each F/A kit must be inventoried at least annually. During the inventory, check medicine expiration dates, the condition of each item in the kit, and the moisture protection for those items susceptible to deterioration due to dampness. If you use something from the kit, replace it as soon as you return home! If you leave the replacement chore until later, it will not get done.

Pain Killer: If you need to evacuate and get to a clinic, remember that any pain killer taken may relieve pain, and may also hide symptoms that the doctor may need for a proper diagnosis of your problem/s.

Storage - Packing: Between trips, store your F/A kit in a cool dry location, not in the attic or garage. Keep it out of the glove compartment and out of the sun. Heat causes some medicines to deteriorate. Pack your F/A kit in a readily recognizable container.

¹For the 24 hour medical facilities and ambulance services nearest to TATC's Section of the Appalachian Trail, refer to the TATC Educational Handout titled: "TATC A.T. SECTION DATA SHEET."

Remember: Someone else may have to get it out of your pack for you. Use locking food bags, or vacuum-pack things that must stay dry, like matches. A food vacuum packer works very well.

Common Problems: 53% of wilderness injuries are sprains and strains; 60% of wilderness illnesses are non-specific viral syndromes and diarrhea (Backpacker Magazine, Beyond the Band-Aid, May 1992, pg 20).

Hygiene: Hygiene is a part of prevention that can keep you out of your F/A kit. Keep pots and eating utensils clean and covered. Don't place them, or food, on the ground or on a shelter floor. A couple of drops of chlorine bleach in the dish rinse water may preclude problems later on.

Employ good personal hygiene: wash your hands after each toilet, after applying sun screen or insect repellent, before preparing or eating each snack or food, and before hitting the sack. You don't want what is on your hands in your mouth, or in your eyes. In this respect you might want to carry a very small container of hand sanitizer Hygiene is more important in the field than at home because:

- You don't have a nearby faucet to remind you to wash.
- You do have poison ivy oil, insect repellent or sun screen on your hands. These can be transferred, when you scratch or rub, to an itchy eye.
- Critters are using the same bathroom you are using; i.e., the great outdoors.

Most Used Items: Over the years I've found the most used items to be:

Antibacterial cream.
Band-Aids ® (many, many Band-Aids)
Diaper pin.
Moleskin ®.
Self-stick, 2 x 4-inch, sterile pads
Tiny Swiss Army Knife ® scissors.

NOTE: This does not preclude the need to carry complete F/A kit ! Refer to the TATC Education Handout titled: "FIRST AID KIT."

Most Needed Item: Common sense.

Reference Books: Prices approximate.

Wilderness Medicine by William Forgery, N.D., ICS Books, One Tower Plaza, 107 E. 89th St, Merrillville IN 46410, \$10.95

Medicine For The Backcountry by Buck Tilton and Frank Hubbell, ICS Books \$13.50

Outward Bound Wilderness First-Aid Handbook by Jedd Isaac and Peter Goth, M.D., Lyons and Burford Publishers, 31 W. 21st St., NY NY 10010, \$13.95
Medicine for Mountaineering, edited by James Wilkerson, M.D., the Mountaineers books, 1011 SW Klickitat Way, Suite 107, Seattle WA \$12.95

NOLS Wilderness First Aid, by Tod Schimelpfenig and Linda Lindsey, Stackhole Books, \$14.95, 1991, (A publication of the National Outdoor Leadership School).

Third Edition Revised, Mountaineering First Aid, A Guide to Accident Response and First Aid Care, The Mountaineers, 1011 S.W. Klickitat Way, Suite 107, Seattle WA 98134, \$8.95, 1990.