

Many of the minor first aid problems encountered on a canoe trip can be handled with the application of a band-aid. You may canoe trip for years and require nothing more than this type of first aid. But, when you are in the wilderness and away from medical assistance, a well provisioned first aid kit and basic first aid knowledge can be a life saver.

This brochure was written to help you decide what to put into your first aid kit. It is not THE KIT; it is simply a list of items found in surveying lists of first aid kit contents, examining several first aid kits, and several years of canoe tripping experience.

When using this list to decide which items and the number of each item to put into your kit, consider the following criteria: your first aid knowledge, experiences, and skills; the remoteness of the trip; the duration of the trip; the age and type of participant on the trip; the number of participants; and the dictates of the organisation you work for.

Equipment

- first aid manual
- pen/pencil and paper
- waterproof matches/lighter
- scalpel and spare blades
- suture kit
- tweezers
- magnifying glass
- mirror (unbreakable)
- flashlight
- wire cutters, if fishing
- needles
- safety pins (several sizes)
- scissors
- cold and hot packs
- thermometer
- tongue depressors
- splint (mesh or inflatable)
- plastic finger splint
- space blanket
- sterile gloves
- money

External Applications

waterproof band-aids (several sizes)
pressure bandages (several sizes)
butterfly bandages (several sizes)
sterile gauze squares (several sizes)
adhesive tape (several sizes)
sterile gauze squares (several sizes)
sterile gauze rolls (several sizes)
elastic roller bandages
triangular bandages
eye pads or patches
moleskin
Q-tips
cotton balls
Vaseline
sun screen
sunburn ointment
antiseptic/antibiotic cream
antiseptic soap/alcohol swabs
local anaesthetic
anti-itch salve
lip balm

Internal Medications

It is essential that you be familiar with the accepted use of each of the following medications, if they are included in your first aid kit.

decongestant
antihistamine
analgesics (several types and strengths)
tooth ache drops/ointment
anti-motion medication
anti-diarrheal medication
antibiotics
anakit
laxative
antacid
eye drops
ear drops

Recommendations

Educating Yourself

When selecting “over the counter” medications, consult the pharmacist for the most effective product, any possible side effects, and possible drug interactions.

Several of the internal medications listed may be purchased only with a prescription. When consulting with your physician, discuss the accepted use of each medication, any side effects, and any precautions. Get as much information in writing as possible and keep this information in the first aid kit.

Take a standard first aid course, a CPR course, and a wilderness first aid or wilderness emergency care course. Courses are offered by St. John Ambulance, Red Cross, and many Community Colleges. Practise first aid scenarios to refresh your knowledge and skills and prepare for possible incidents/accidents.

Carry, familiarise yourself with, and use a first aid or wilderness medicine manual.

Carrying the Kit

Carry the first aid kit in a waterproof container with a red cross marked clearly on the outside. Be certain that everyone knows where the kit is kept when canoeing, portaging, hiking, and camping.

You may want to keep all internal medications in a separate container in the first aid kit with instructions that only you may administer these.

Modify your kit when necessary; replace items and medications as they are used up or outdated.

You may want to make up two kits, one for day or weekend trips and one for longer trips. You may want to purchase a ready-made kit until your knowledge and skills increase.

Encourage everyone to carry a few first aid items of his/her own and any necessary personal medications. You should be aware of any personal medications used by other members of the group.

Planning

Before the canoe trip, gather information from each participant to identify who has special medical problems. Keep this information in the kit. Have a record of everyone's health card number, next of kin's name and phone number, and family doctor's name and phone number.

Keep a record of all incidents requiring first aid treatment, especially if you administer any medications. An accident report form can be useful. Know that there is the possibility that a first aid situation may develop that is beyond your skills and knowledge and the best that you can do is comfort and reassure the victim while professional assistance is sought. Have a plan ahead of time for such a situation.

With careful planning, organisation, and due consideration to risk identification and management, you may need nothing more than a few band-aids; but be prepared.

Reference Books

Auerbach *Medicine for the Outdoors*

Benner et al *Emergency Medical Procedures for the Outdoors*

Forgey *Hypothermia - Death by Exposure*

Forgey *Wilderness Medicine*

Henderson *Emergency Medical Guide*

Isaac and Goth *The Outward Bound Wilderness First Aid Handbook*

Kodet and Angier *Being Your Own Wilderness Doctor*

Schimelpfenig and Lindsey *NOLS Wilderness First Aid*

St. John ambulance *First Aid - Safety Oriented*

St. John ambulance *Official Wilderness First Aid Guide*

Tilton and Hubbell *Medicine for the Backcountry*

Wilkerson *Medicine for Mountaineering*

Wilkerson et al *Hypothermia, Frostbite, and Other Cold Injuries*

The Ontario Recreational Canoeing and Kayaking Association (ORCKA) promotes the development of safe, competent and knowledgeable recreational paddlers.

ORCKA has developed standards and instruction programs in introductory canoeing, Canadian style paddling, canoe tripping, river running and moving water canoeing and canoe tripping. ORCKA has also developed a dynamic kayaking program covering introductory kayaking, coastal kayaking, moving water kayaking and kayak tripping. From beginning paddlers to expert instructors, the ORCKA paddling Programs are used throughout Ontario and recognised nationally.

Take a canoeing or kayaking course with one of the many organisations using the ORCKA programs.

Canoe Trip First Aid Kit



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