

Outdoors E.R.

Accidents happen in the wilderness. Here's how to be prepared for them

For outdoors enthusiasts, medical emergencies come in all shapes and sizes and often happen without warning. The most common injuries include broken bones, burns, cuts and scrapes. Because these occurrences are simply a part of life outdoors, sportsmen should be equipped to handle them at all times.

Of course, not every medical emergency can be completely treated in the field. In some situations, you must call in the professionals. That means a reliable communication system should be as much a part of your gear as the first-aid kit.

While there are some great ready-made kits available (a good source is adventuremedicalkits.com), you don't have to spend a lot to put together your own. This three-part kit was assembled for about \$50 and stows nicely in a few zip-close bags.



FRACTURE KIT

WHAT TO DO:

- Stop any bleeding with direct pressure.
- Check for a pulse below the fracture. Watch for paleness in the skin, which indicates a loss of circulation. If the circulation is cut off, gangrene might develop. Get the victim to a doctor as soon as possible.
- Check the victim for other injuries, and treat as necessary.
- Apply splints to all fractures before moving the victim. Prepared splints are great, but you can improvise. Use the elastic or gauze bandage to secure splints along the broken bone. Tie them so they don't reduce circulation, but are tight enough to keep the bone from shifting. If the break involves a joint, secure the splint both above and below the joint, to keep it from moving.

WHAT YOU NEED:

- Splint material. This can be a SAM splint, an inflatable splint or rigid splints made of wood, plastic or other material.
- Arm sling. (A triangular bandage and safety pins will work, too)
- Gauze roller bandages
- Elastic roller bandages



BURN KIT

WHAT TO DO:

- Remove watch and jewelry in case of swelling and flood the area with cool (not cold) water. Use ice only on small burns, and even then, isolate it from the injury with gauze.
- Examine the skin for blistering or charring, to determine the severity of the burn.
- Apply aloe vera gel to first-degree burns and administer anti-inflammatory drugs for pain relief and to hasten healing.
- For second-degree burns, flood the injury, then trim away loose skin with scissors. Leave small blisters intact; open blisters can become infected. Apply aloe vera. Cover injury with non-adherent dressing (change dressing once a day).
- Treat third-degree burns as you would a second-degree burn. Treat for shock. Evacuate victim as soon as possible.

WHAT YOU NEED:

- Aloe vera gel
- Scissors
- Non-adherent dressing (like Spenco 2nd Skin)
- Non-adherent pads
- Medical tape
- Gauze roller bandages
- Anti-inflammatory drugs (ask your doctor for a recommendation)