

First aid kit

Why keep a first aid kit at home?

Accidents commonly happen at home. It therefore makes sense to keep a first aid kit handy at home for dealing with minor injuries, or for keeping a serious injury stable while seeking medical help.

What should you include?

The following list can be used as a shopping list. The quantity of each item is a guide only, and can be increased or decreased depending on the number of people in your home.

Essential items

- individually wrapped plasters in various sized (fabric or waterproof) x 12-24
- sterile dressings, e.g. Melolin (for covering a wound): 3 medium (5cm x 5cm) and 1 large (10cm x 10cm)
- adhesive microtape e.g. Micropore (to hold dressings in place; this can also be used alone on small cuts and grazes)
- triangular bandage (for use as a sling for supporting an injured arm or shoulder)
- crepe bandage (to support sprains and strains; or to hold dressings in place)
- sterile absorbent gauze (for cleaning and drying wounds; also for covering wounds)
- safety pins in a variety of sizes (for securing bandages)
- round-ended scissors (for cutting tape or bandages)
- tweezers (for removing objects, such as splinters)

Optional extras

- sterile eye pad (a large wound dressing can be used instead to cover an injured eye)
- skin closure strips (for holding the edges of a wound together)
- sterile saline sachets (for cleaning a wound), but clean water will do
- thermometer

Medicines that can be useful for keeping at home in case of minor accidents include hydrocortisone cream (for insect bites but not for broken or infected skin), paracetamol (tablets for adults, liquid for children - for pain relief) and antihistamine tablets (for allergic reactions). These should be kept in a separate locked medicines cabinet. For further advice, ask your pharmacist.

What should you store a first aid kit in?

A waterproof container that is large enough for the contents to be arranged neatly so that items can be found quickly when needed. A plastic container with a closely fitting lid would be suitable. It is a good idea to label the box (e.g. with a green cross) so that it can be easily recognised.

Ready-made kits

There are many ready-made kits available that can be bought from a pharmacy or drugstore. There is no standard for first aid kits and the content of different kits varies. You should check the content carefully. Some may not include all the items you need, while others contain more than you are likely to need or even some unnecessary items (such as cotton wool or alcoholic wipes, which are unsuitable for cleaning wounds). Making a kit up yourself might cost more than some ready-made kits, but you're more likely to end up with a kit containing just the things you need.

Where should you keep it?

It makes sense to keep your first aid kit close to where it is most likely to be needed. It should be out of the reach of children, but still readily accessible when needed. The place should be dry and cool, so the bathroom is probably not ideal.

Use of the first aid kit

Just as important as keeping a first aid kit, is knowing how to use what's in it. All adults and older children and teenagers living in the house should know where the kit is kept, what is in it and how to use it. It's a good idea to keep a first aid manual with the kit.

Used items should be replaced immediately and expiry dates checked from time to time, so that out-of-date items are discarded and replaced.

It is a good idea to get proper training in first aid. This is provided by organisations like St John Ambulance and the British Red Cross. Contact them for details of local training courses.

Further information

Hong Kong St John Ambulance

(24 hour free ambulance service)

Tel : (852) 2530 8032

Fax : (852) 2530 2727

Homepage : www.stjohn.org.hk

Hong Kong Red Cross

Address: 33 Harcourt Road, Wanchai, HK

Tel : (852) 2802 0021

Fax : (852) 2802 7359

E-mail : info@redcross.org.hk

Website : <http://redcross.org.hk>

Fire Services Department (CPR training)

Tel : (852) 2640 3708

<http://www.info.gov.hk/hkfsd/english/useful/useful.htm>

Healthwise (Health Information Resource Centre)

Tel : (852) 2849 2400

Fax : (852) 2849 2900

Email : info@healthwise.org.hk

Homepage : www.healthwise.org.hk

This leaflet is for information only. For a detailed opinion or personal advice, please consult your own doctor.

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