Making a First Aid Kit

A first aid kit is a good way to organize the supplies you will need in an emergency. Basic materials and supplies are needed in every kit. Think about some situations when a first aid kit would have been helpful and what you would have needed. Include those items. Additional items may be added for special situations. Space is limited, so leave out things you don’t need or won’t use. Depending on where you will be using the kit, other items may vary.

Think about the different places outside your home where you would want to have a first aid kit. It might be a kit to take to sporting events or one to keep in the car. If you live on a farm, each tractor should have a first aid kit. If your family goes camping, you will need a kit for your camper. Specialized kits can be developed for many different situations, places or activities. Some questions to ask as you create your kit include:

1. What type of storage container would be best? A soft-sided lunch box may work for a first aid kit kept under the car seat, but a tough plastic case that seals out dirt would be better for a tractor.

2. Which injuries could occur in this situation or during this activity, and what items do I need to take care of those injuries? For example, if you are making a first aid kit for a camper, you might want to include a tweezers to remove ticks, splinters or insect stingers.

3. Are there any special storage needs for items in the kit? If the kit is for a boat, all items should be in plastic so they can’t get wet. A kit should have materials that help you deal with the most urgent first aid situations, such as a blocked airway and difficulty breathing, bleeding, thermal and chemical burns and poisoning. For the user’s safety, your first aid kit should have several pairs of rubber or vinyl gloves of different sizes to fit anyone using the kit. They should be stored either in self-sealing plastic bags or plastic film cans to prevent deterioration. Include materials such as pocket masks or barrier devices to protect from infectious diseases.

Here is a suggested list of materials for a general first aid kit:

1. List each item in the kit and what it is used for.

   **Airway and breathing**
   - Pocket mask or barrier device

   **Bleeding control**
   - Small wounds
   - Large wounds
   - Major wounds
   - Bandages (several of various sizes)
   - Sterile dressings (two each: 2 inches by 2 inches and 4 inches by 4 inches)
   - Sterile dressing (one 11 inches by 14 inches or larger)
   - 1-, 2- and 4-inch roller gauze
   - Hypoallergenic tape

   **Burn treatment**
   - Minor thermal
   - Major thermal
   - Chemical
   - Non-allergenic ointment
   - Sterile water or saline for cooling or flushing
   - Sterile dressings (same as bleeding control)
| Infectious disease protection | Small, medium and large vinyl or rubber gloves |
| Antiseptic |
| Waterless hand cleaner |
| Miscellaneous | Blunt tip scissors or shears |
| Note pad and pencil or pen |
| Penlight |
| Fracture care | Two triangular bandages |
| Splint material |

2. All items should be labeled and arranged so that anyone using the kit will know where each item is and its intended use.

3. Check expiration dates. Be sure all items are tightly closed or sealed.

**More about it**

1. Check first aid items in your family's kits and medicine chest. Discard all items with past expiration dates, including medications.
2. Give a presentation to your club or another group about making a first aid kit.

**Work on it**

Create a specialized first aid kit:

1. Where will it be used?
2. Where will it be stored when not in use?

3. What will you use for a storage container?
4. Make a list of contents. Include all the basic supplies and add other items needed for the situation. For example, a kit carried in a boat should probably include sunscreen, small diagonal cutters (to cut fishhooks) and clamping forceps or hemostats to remove impaled fishhooks. If you include medicine for family members with special needs, label it clearly as being for a specific individual or individuals. Make sure that any medicine in the kit is not outdated.
5. List the use of each item.
6. Label all items so others using the kit will know what each item is used for.

**Think about it**

Stop and think about these questions. Share your answers with an adult.

1. What did you consider as you selected the storage container and the items to go into your kit?
2. Think of another decision you will make in the near future, like buying a new bike or what to wear to a party. What will you need to consider as you make your decision?