



Natural first-aid kit

Tue, 2010-06-22 19:02

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It's summertime and the living is—well, a little hazardous, now that you're out and about more. But with the right supplies in hand, you can deal with bumps, bites, and bruises gently and effectively. “Most minor first-aid conditions can be treated well with natural medicines,” says Karen Barnes, ND, owner of the Burlington Naturopathic and Wellness Clinic in Ontario, Canada, and author of *Naturopathic First Aid* (CCNM, 2004). Include the following must-haves in your own first-aid kit; all are available at natural products stores.

Aloe vera. The gel from this succulent plant soothes [sunburns](#) and other first-degree burns, Barnes says. It also relieves itching from poison oak or ivy, helps prevent infection and speed tissue healing, and even soothes frostbite pain, says Brigitte Mars, professor of herbal medicine at Boulder, Colorado-based Naropa University and author of *The Desktop Guide to Herbal Medicine* (Basic Health, 2007). Be sure to get the topical gel, not the ingestible kind.



Basics for your first aid kit

Bandages (both adhesive, like Band-Aids, and elastic, like Ace wraps)

Gauze pads

First-aid tape

Raw honey, for cuts and burns

Safety pins

Small scissors

Tweezers

Nonlatex gloves

Epinephrine pen, if you or family members are allergic to bee stings

Apis. Try this homeopathic remedy (in pellets that dissolve under the tongue) instead of hydrocortisone cream or Benadryl. “It’s great for [stings](#) or burns where there’s a lot of swelling,” Barnes says. In fact, apis gets its Latin name (*Apis mellifica*)—and its active ingredient, venom—from the honeybee, following the homeopathic principle of like healing like. Barnes recommends the 30CH-potency tablets for adults and children.

Arnica. “It’s good for [bruising](#) or any [wound] that has tissue trauma,” Barnes says, including sprains and muscle aches.

Instead of using conventional treatments such as ibuprofen, apply arnica as a cream or oil on an inflamed or irritated area as long as there's no open wound. (Topical arnica may be toxic and increase bleeding if it gets into the bloodstream too directly.) Otherwise, dissolve 30CH homeopathic pellets, appropriate for adults or children, containing dilute arnica under the tongue.

Calendula. A member of the marigold family, calendula is a natural alternative to antibiotic ointment. "Calendula has both wound-healing and antiseptic properties," Barnes says, making it useful as a diluted tincture to clean and heal minor cuts and scrapes, and in a salve to promote tissue healing.

Charcoal. Made of finely powdered carbon that's treated with oxygen to make it highly porous, "activated" charcoal is able to trap infectious agents and prevent them from entering the bloodstream, Mars says. Mix the powder with water and apply it on bites and stings two to three times a day, covering with gauze and tape.

Natural first-aid kits to buy

Boiron Jet Lag CareKit. Don't let the name fool you—the three common remedies (arnica, plus nux vomica and *Cocculus indicus* for sleep disturbance and queasiness) in this compact kit can be used in myriad circumstances.
boironusa.com

Hyland's Remedy Chest. Includes 29 homeopathic medicines, along with a reference guide about how to use each.
hylands.com

Hyland's Kids' Kit. Contains the six homeopathic remedies most useful for easing kids' bumps, bruises, and illnesses.
hylands.com

Echinacea. Well known for supporting immunity during cold and flu season, echinacea also can be applied topically as a tincture to reduce infections from bug bites, cuts, and boils, Mars says. "It stimulates the immune system by increasing the body's white blood cell production."

Hypericum. Crush injuries—like slamming your fingers in a door or stubbing your toe—can be brutally painful. Take a few 30CH pellets of homeopathic hypericum (the same plant that St. John's wort comes from) and you'll feel relief in minutes, Barnes says.

Lavender and tea tree essential oils. "They are like a first-aid kit in a bottle," Mars says, and they're often interchangeable. Unlike most [essential oils](#), both can be applied undiluted on the skin (though if you have sensitive skin, tea tree oil may cause irritation). "You could apply either [oil] directly to cleanse a wound and reduce pain, thanks to their antiseptic and anti-inflammatory properties. You could gargle with one or two drops of tea tree oil in a cup of water. You could use lavender for smelling salts," she says. Both help cool and relieve minor burns; lavender also works as an insect repellent, stress reducer, and headache reliever. For insect repellent, dab on pulse points as you would a perfume. To reduce stress, sprinkle a few drops on a tissue and breathe it in deeply, or add to bath water or a carrier massage oil. For [headache relief](#), rub a few drops into the temples or forehead.

Rescue Remedy (or other Five-Flower Remedy). "Don't leave home without it," Mars says of this combination of flower essences—specifically, star of Bethlehem, rockrose, cherry plum, impatiens, and clematis—used to reduce fear or shock after an injury (it can be taken by both the injured person and the caregiver). Place a few drops under the tongue or in a glass of water and sip the water throughout the day if you like; there's no risk of overdose.

Umeboshi plum concentrate. Stir a tiny amount (using the included measuring spoon) into a cup of tepid or hot (not boiling) water and sip to relieve almost any digestive ailment, including [acid indigestion](#), diarrhea, constipation, food poisoning, and hangover nausea. It's also good for headaches, Mars says. It's very stable and has preservative properties, so it's great for travel.

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