

an Eagle Scout and one of the premier authorities on wilderness medicine, to teach you all you need to know about first-aid kits.



## THE LOW DOWN

**Build it or buy it?** “The biggest advantage to building your own kit is knowing exactly what you have in your kit and where it is inside,” Dr. Weiss says. The hard part is buying everything you need in small enough sizes to keep your first-aid kit light and compact.

But buying a prepackaged kit costs less, requires no set up time and usually comes in a specially designed storage bag with handy pockets and compartments.

“If you buy a commercially made kit, just make sure you take everything out of it and then put it back in so you’re familiar with all of the components,” he says. “Understand what each item is used for so you’ll be prepared.”

**Price:** You’ll save money by buying a kit. “As little as \$10 to \$25 should take care of it,” Dr. Weiss says. Look for one that’s well organized. “This eliminates the hunt-and-search,” he explains. “In an emergency, you want anyone to be able to open the kit and quickly find what they need.”

**Customizing a kit:** “The type of medical kit and supplies you bring will be dependent on your group size, trip duration and remoteness,” Dr. Weiss says. “For remote locations you’ll need to rely on your group’s resources, and your medical kit should be stocked with supplies to treat a much wider range of injuries or illnesses than for a day hike in the woods.”

Make a list of the types of activities you do most often and the sort of places you most often go and how long you’ll be gone, then build or buy a kit to fit.



**What every kit should include:** “Don’t forget to pack a first-aid manual,” he says. Nothing takes the place of first-aid training, but it’s important to have a good manual that you can turn to in an emergency.

Beyond that, you’ll want to include supplies to treat the most common outdoor injuries — stuff like moleskin for blisters, tweezers for splinters, bandages, antibiotic ointment and antiseptic towelettes for cuts and scrapes, ibuprofen for aches and pain, and antihistamines for allergic reactions.

**What you should leave out:** Skip the instant ice packs, Dr. Weiss says. “They’re heavy and only provide about 15 minutes of cold therapy. To properly treat a sprained ankle, you need to ice the injured area every 30 minutes. Use ice from a cooler, snow or cold water from a river or lake if you need to improvise.”

And forget the hydrogen peroxide—it’s so strong it kills the germs and living tissue, so it’ll just take longer for your wound to heal. “The only solution you need to clean wounds is clean drinking water or a dilute povidone-iodine solution if the wound is particularly dirty,” he says.

**Keep your kit current:** “Make a contents list so you can keep an inventory of items in your kit,” he says. “And as my mom always said: Put your name and phone number on it.” Get into the habit of checking your kit before every outing. If any medicines and ointments have expired or have been used up, replace them. And make sure nothing is wet or spoiled.

## BUILD IT YOURSELF

As it says in the “First Aid” merit badge pamphlet, “The worst first-aid kit is the one that never gets made.” Make sure that doesn’t happen by buying a good kit like those shown here or building one yourself.

**At Home:** Gather these materials and keep them in a handy spot in the house:

- First-aid manual, like the “First Aid” merit badge pamphlet
- 2 2-inch gauze bandages
- Roll of 1-inch adhesive tape
- 12 3-by-3-inch sterile pads



- 12 assorted adhesive bandages
- 2 elastic bandages, 3 to 6 inches wide
- Thermometer
- Scissors
- Tweezers
- Box antiseptic wipes with benzalkonium chloride
- 2 pairs latex gloves
- Safety pins
- Calamine lotion
- Eye goggles
- Mouth-barrier device
- Small bottle antihistamines (Benadryl)
- Small bottle acetaminophen for pain and fever
- Small bottle ibuprofen for inflammation, muscle aches, pain and fever



**For the Trail:** This kit should cover one patrol on a typical outing:

- First-aid manual, like the “First Aid” merit badge pamphlet
- 1 2-inch roller bandage
- 2 1-inch roller bandages
- 2 rolls of 1-inch adhesive tape
- 6 alcohol swabs
- Water purification tablets
- 12 assorted adhesive bandages
- 2 elastic bandages, 3 to 6 inches wide
- 12 3-by-3-inch sterile pads
- Antiseptic towelettes
- 2 triangular bandages, 40-inch
- 2 3-by-4-inch nonadherent sterile dressings
- 5-by-9-inch trauma pad to stanch bleeding
- Moleskin
- 3 butterfly closure bandages
- Petroleum jelly
- Antibiotic ointment
- Insect repellent
- Scissors
- Tweezers
- Safety pins
- Aloe vera gel for sunburn
- 2 pairs latex gloves
- Mouth-barrier device

## INDIVIDUAL FIRST-AID KITS

One of these should be in every pack:

**REI Hiker First Aid Kit** (\$28) This fold-out kit has 11 organizer pockets packed with all the basics for day hikes. Weight: 12.5 oz. ([www.boyslife.org/links/rei](http://www.boyslife.org/links/rei) or 1-800-426-4840)



**Adventure Medical Kits Light and Fast Trail** (\$26) A lightweight kit with simple-to-follow E-Z Care instructions that organizes supplies based on the type of injury. Weight: 12 oz.

([www.boyslife.org/links/amkits](http://www.boyslife.org/links/amkits) or 1-800-324-3517)

**Scout Camper First Aid Kit** (\$19) This is the smallest and most affordable kit here with a pared-down collection of first-aid basics packed inside a plastic case. Weight: 3 oz. ([www.boyslife.org/links/scoutstuff](http://www.boyslife.org/links/scoutstuff) or 1-800-323-0736)

## FOR THE PATROL (for 5 to 9 Scouts)

One of these can be shared by a patrol:

**REI Backpacker First Aid Kit** (\$42) A great value for the price, this kit includes a wide-range of first-aid supplies (plenty for your patrol) and is ideal for a multi-day backcountry outing. Weight: 1 lb. 9 oz. ([www.boyslife.org/links/rei](http://www.boyslife.org/links/rei) or 1-800-426-4840)

**Atwater Carey Expedition Kit** (\$55) Designed for backcountry trips of up to 10 days, the Expedition Kit includes all of the necessary basics for your patrol's first-aid needs. Weight: 15 oz. ([www.boyslife.org/links/atwatercarey](http://www.boyslife.org/links/atwatercarey) or 1-800-558-6614)

**Adventure Medical Kits Weekender** (\$60) The name of this kit is a little misleading because this well-stocked rig can handle groups of six for backcountry outings lasting up to a week. Also includes simple-to-follow E-Z Care first-aid instructions. Weight: 1 lb. 7 oz. ([www.boyslife.org/links/scoutstuff](http://www.boyslife.org/links/scoutstuff) or 1-800-323-0736)



## KITS FOR AN ENTIRE TROOP

Give one or two of these to your Scoutmaster to haul:

**Adventure Medical Kits Comprehensive** (\$190) The most complete kit here, the Comprehensive is designed for groups of up to 14 on multi-week expeditions and even comes with a smaller, detachable ultralight and waterproof kit for summit attempts. Weight: 3 lbs. 4 oz. ([www.boyslife.org/links/amkits](http://www.boyslife.org/links/amkits) or 1-800-324-3517)



**Atwater Carey Pro Series 3.0** (\$100) A less-expensive and lighter-weight option — though also slightly less comprehensive — this kit is well suited for multi-week care for groups of up to eight Scouts. Weight: 2 lbs. 1 oz. ([www.boyslife.org/links/atwatercarey](http://www.boyslife.org/links/atwatercarey) or 1-800-558-6614)

## Comments about “First-aid kit buying guide”

1. *P.T.* says:

[January 7, 2010 at 12:58 pm](#)

Around me they sell them in the camping section at walmart.

[Reply](#)

2. *scowt999* says:

[December 22, 2009 at 5:29 pm](#)

dos ani one know where i can buy a space blanket?????  
the shiny kind.

[Reply](#)

3. *Some Kid* says:

[November 6, 2009 at 9:44 pm](#)

any insect reppelen with no deet in it will not reppel mosquitoes

[Reply](#)

4. *BBT* says:

[October 25, 2009 at 4:42 pm](#)

I think you should always add Aloe Vera gel to your first aid kit. I hear it takes burns away quick and good.

[Reply](#)

5. *All Around Camper and Hiker 382* says:

[September 28, 2009 at 11:14 am](#)

Which is the better quality producer of first aid kits for camping and backpacking—the American Red Cross First Aid Kits or the first aid kits produced by Johnson and Johnson?

[Reply](#)

6. *3d 59* says:

[August 29, 2009 at 9:57 pm](#)

I do think it's important to take the necessary supplies,  
Otherwise if not, it will just be some extra weight

[Reply](#)

7. *galaxy\_gazer* says:

[August 19, 2009 at 8:26 am](#)

A couple brief comments about commercial (bought) first-aid packs.

First – the commercial packs are okay – and a potential rescuer can quite easily identify that they are a first aid kit. But you \*need\* to open them up, look through them (see what \*is\* in there – and more importantly, what is \*not\* in there) and adjust them for your own needs {diabetic? better have insulin; allergies? in goes the Benadryl}. Second, don't assume your 6-year-old never-used first aid kit is good. Go through first aid (yearly, maybe) and replace out-of-date medications, cremes, etc.

[Reply](#)

8. *dude100* says:

[August 14, 2009 at 12:38 pm](#)

I agree with TROOP45

[Reply](#)

9. *jfman* says:

[July 30, 2009 at 3:16 pm](#)

its better to have a “made your self aid kit” than a purchased one, its cheaper and you always know where the stuff is.

[Reply](#)

10. *max* says:

[July 21, 2009 at 8:36 am](#)

i 'm glad too about know this help for first aid kit keep it up informing us about this from ; max

[Reply](#)

11. *kool guy* says:

[July 12, 2009 at 11:44 pm](#)

it is very cool

[Reply](#)

12. *15gt50* says:

[May 29, 2009 at 8:58 pm](#)

thanks for telling me this

[Reply](#)

13. *monz* says:

[April 28, 2009 at 4:52 am](#)

im glad to knw this !  
thank you, it helped me a lot !

[Reply](#)

14. *HIGUY* says:  
[March 26, 2009 at 5:34 pm](#)

Good advice!!!

[Reply](#)

15. *Boomer* says:  
[March 20, 2009 at 4:09 pm](#)

We used the REI Backpacker for a 6 day trek last summer. It's light and packs easily. There is plenty of room to add extra stuff. We added some extra pairs of gloves and a couple of triangle bandages in case we needed to improvise a splint. The only down side is that there are some hidden pockets that might make things hard to find in an emergency. Fortunately we didn't need to use much of anything.

[Reply](#)

16. *killer rob* says:  
[March 10, 2009 at 10:36 am](#)

thanx for this type of thing!

[Reply](#)

17. *qwerty* says:  
[February 27, 2009 at 1:29 pm](#)

very helpful

[Reply](#)

18. *Trooper734* says:  
[February 25, 2009 at 11:14 am](#)

Thanks BL I needed that help.

[Reply](#)

19. *Benguy* says:  
[February 24, 2009 at 8:15 pm](#)

In any kit, be sure to use non-latex gloves and bandages. You cannot pick who you will be treating, and you will not know if they are allergic to latex.

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20. *Reid* says:  
[February 21, 2009 at 8:12 pm](#)

This helps me a lot

[Reply](#)

21. *Papa Smurf* says:  
[February 17, 2009 at 3:36 pm](#)

Duct Tape! I never leave home with out it! I've backpacked over 4,000 miles and it is the only thing in my first aid kit that I use over and over again. It is significantly better than moleskin for blisters. Moleskin has a tendency to move or roll up when you do a lot of miles. Plus it is thick and sometimes creates a problem sore spot. The duct tape is thin and sticks extremely well. I've used it to splint fingers and a wrist, repair shoes, tent, pack, etc. I once made a cup to drink from. Great stuff. I just make several wraps around my walking sticks or water bottle and I'm good to go.

[Reply](#)

22. *Dragon* says:  
[February 13, 2009 at 8:07 am](#)

Thanks dude21 I will try that! Anyone else have any suggestions?

[Reply](#)

23. *dude21* says:

[February 12, 2009 at 1:48 pm](#)

Well Dragon like the guide said think about what you do and then pack or buy one that has the things you need for the trip. Also I think you need to look at a sporting goods store if you buy because they most likely have the items you need for the first aid kit and can help you choose one in your price range and help figure out what you need as well.

[Reply](#)

24. *Dragon* says:

[February 12, 2009 at 10:34 am](#)

I am going on a fishing/camping/hiking trip and I want to ask what you would recommend for a kit that can provide for about five people on a four day trip?

[Reply](#)

25. *troop74* says:

[December 4, 2008 at 7:59 pm](#)

ALWAYS PUT IT IN A ZIPLOCK BAG FOR WATERPROOF

[Reply](#)

26. *Leader* says:

[November 7, 2008 at 9:34 pm](#)

We carry a big self-made first aid kit to the camp site. When taking a hike, we each carry a specific item. If there are only a few of us, we carry bandages and something for stings/cuts. That way we can replenish what we need when we get back to base camp. We also carry a whistle in case we need emergent help.

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27. *Hweathin* says:

[November 5, 2008 at 7:31 pm](#)

If you have an allergy allways bring benadryl or if it is bad, an epi-pin.

[Reply](#)

28. *SPL Troop16* says:

[October 21, 2008 at 9:13 am](#)

i don't see the atvantiges to buying a first-aid kit when the ones u make are a lot better on price and you know what the things in them are always going to be because i bought a frist aid kit and half of the stuff was missing

[Reply](#)

29. *TROOP45* says:

[October 8, 2008 at 4:34 pm](#)

TRY TO MAKE IT LITE A COMPACK WITH TO STUFF YOU NEED.

SO WHEN BACKPACKING/HIKEING IT WILL BE EASYER

[Reply](#)

30. *Anonymous* says:

[September 19, 2008 at 1:09 pm](#)

and, breed,you have a weird web site name. does it mean to breed humins?

[Reply](#)

31. *runnerkid* says:  
[September 18, 2008 at 4:40 pm](#)

this is awesome don't you think

[Reply](#)

32. *breed♥* says:  
[September 18, 2008 at 1:35 pm](#)

Why is this website for all boys? I think you should make it for boys and girls. But otherwise, I love this website.

[Reply](#)

o *scowt999* says:  
[December 22, 2009 at 5:36 pm](#)

dudett, this is BOYS life!!!! duhh!!!!

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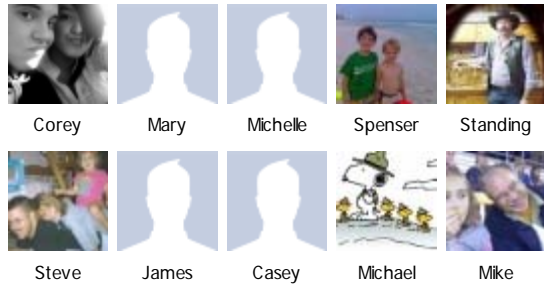
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