

TRAIL TIPS

Helpful Hints for Hiking

First Aid Kit



This is a topic that has come up recently. The Club was fortunate to have Van Judd give an Introduction to First Aid a few months ago to several members, and many questions were asked and answered as to what consists of an adequate First Aid Kit. Van was kind enough to share his experience as an EMT to offer suggestions, which I include here, along with my experience as a trained Medical First Responder.

Basic First Aid kits are available through many different sources; REI, other hiking gear stores, Amazon, etc. A basic kit will set you back around \$20-30, based on just how much stuff is included. Along with the basics, I include a few specialty items geared towards hazards we encounter when hiking in the desert.

Assorted Band Aids, including standard, fingertip, and butterfly.

Gauze Pads, measuring 4x4, 3x5, and 2x3 inches, along with a roll of 2" wide gauze dressing.

Adhesive Medical Tape, 1 and 2 inches wide.

Cold Compress pack.

Moleskin (this is a dense, adhesive pad that can be cut to cover a sore area on one's foot before it blisters; it has saved my feet many a time).

Alcohol Wipes and Neosporin, or other antibiotic dressing ointment.

Tylenol, Motrin, and Insect Bite Relief pads.

Disposable Surgical Gloves. A First Aid handbook. First Responder data form.

Surgical scissors, to remove constricting clothing, cut moleskin, adhesive tape, dressings, etc.



B Hikers in South Mountain, Jan 2017

The above items are what is included in most basic kits. Below are optional items highly suggested:

Cactus Needle Removers. These can be needle nose pliers, hemostats, or sturdy tweezers. Combs have been suggested to aid in removing Cholla burrs.

A small knife, for scraping off bee stingers.

Quik Clot (a powder to aid in clotting open wounds).

Flashlight; to aid in checking pupil dilation, and signaling SAR if it gets dark.

Small blanket, can be used as a pillow, shock blanket, dressing, etc.

Kerchiefs (see January 2017 Trail Tips edition).

Baby Aspirin (heart attack blood thinner), Benadryl (allergic reaction aid).

Most of the items listed above will fit in the original First Aid Kit bag, except for the blanket and kerchiefs. The additional items cost around \$20-30, depending on where and what you purchase. Most of the consumable items have a shelf life of 3-5 years, so check your gear appropriately over time. I have pulled a Band-Aid or Alcohol Wipe out only to find it has petrified or dried out, rendering it useless at a time I really needed it.

This a wide-ranging topic, and there are many different opinions as to what is really necessary to lug around with you up and down the trails. When I was a backpacking youth, I would trim the margins off of trail maps, just so I would know that I was carrying the least amount of weight possible; after 10 miles of having that 52 pound burden cutting into my shoulders and rubbing my hips raw, it was a small comfort.

My daypack now weighs in at around 15 pounds, with 3 liters of water, lunch, first aid kit, and a few other pieces of gear. So it's not too bad. I despise being unprepared for anything, although I know that I am not prepared for EVERYthing. One does the best one can. You should pack whatever you're comfortable with and are knowledgeable in using. And I would think that if 20% of us are somewhat prepared for a medical emergency whilst out in the boonies, together, we can get everyone out safely.

And ya never know; it may be YOU that ends up needing one of the items that I have listed above. Let's be SAFE out there, hikers! I'll see ya on the trail.

Burton Hill