

## First aid kits

Your first aid kit should be organised, properly stocked and available at all times. It's a good idea to have a first aid kit in various locations such as at home, in the car and at work. You can buy first aid kits from your pharmacy or from providers such as St John Ambulance Australia (Victoria). Specialty kits are also available to meet specific needs.

The *First Aid in the Workplace Code of Practice* (2012) by Safe Work Australia should be used as a reference to guide you in choosing first aid kits for your workplace.

It is strongly recommended that you participate in a first aid course so you will have the knowledge and skills to use equipment in a first aid kit to help someone who is suddenly injured or becomes ill.

### Contents of a basic first aid kit

First aid kit contents vary according to their particular use. For example, a first aid kit for a farm will contain a few different items to a first aid kit for a city-dwelling family.

A basic first aid kit should contain:

- Triangular bandages
- Crepe ('conforming' or elastic) bandages of varying widths
- Non-adhesive (non-stick) dressings of varying sizes
- Disposable gloves (medium and large), preferably made of non-latex material
- Thermal blanket
- Notepad and pencil
- Plastic bags of varying sizes
- Adhesive tape (2.5 cm wide – preferably a permeable tape such as Micropore)
- Resuscitation mask or face shield.

Other equipment can include:

- Medium combine dressing pads (9 x 20 cm)
- Large combine dressing pads (20 x 20 cm)
- Adhesive dressing strips (bandaids)
- Medium gauze dressing (7.5 x 7.5 cm)
- Four sterile tubes of saline solution (minimum 10 ml)
- One pair of scissors
- One pair of tweezers
- First aid booklet.

### Medications in first aid kits

The *First Aid in the Workplace Code of Practice* advises that first aid kits for workplaces should not contain medications. First aid is defined as the provision of emergency treatment and life support for people suffering injury or illness. The dispensing of medication does not generally fall within this definition. It is recommended that medicines are not kept in a first aid kit.

If you keep medicines for yourself or your family, such as paracetamol and aspirin for pain relief, they should be kept secure and out of reach of children.

### Storing your first aid kit

Storage suggestions include:

- Keep the first aid kit in a dry, cool location.
- Make sure the first aid kit is easily accessible and that everyone in the family knows where it is.
- Some items, such as solutions, may have use-by dates. Check regularly and replace when necessary.
- If an item is used from the first aid kit, promptly replace it.

## Learn how to use your first aid kit

A first aid kit won't help if you don't know how to use its contents. Buy a book on basic first aid to read about how to use the contents of the kit or, better still, participate in a first aid course.

## First aid equipment explained

The various gauzes, dressings and bandages found in a first aid kit have different uses. Some of these include:

- Adhesive strip dressings – small strips of gauze attached to a sticky backing. These dressings are used for minor cuts and skin injuries. In Australia, they are commonly called bandaids. It is important to be aware that some people are allergic to bandaids.
- Non-adhesive dressings – best used for covering burnt or abraded (scraped or grazed) skin. Never use adhesive dressings on burnt or abraded skin.
- Wound dressings – these thick pads are used to help control bleeding and reduce the risk of infection. Different sizes are needed for different-sized wounds.
- Crepe or conforming bandages – these elastic bandages are used to create pressure, hold dressings in place, reduce swelling and provide some support.
- Triangular bandages – these non-elastic bandages are used for slings, to hold splints in place and to restrict movement.
- Sterile eyewash solution – used to flush eyelashes, insects, dust, sand or similar particles from the eye. Never attempt to remove an object that is embedded in or has penetrated an eye – in such an instance, seek urgent medical attention.

## Where to get help

- In an emergency, always call triple zero (000)
- St John Ambulance Australia (Victoria) Tel. 1300 360 455
- WorkSafe Advisory Service Tel. (03) 9641 1444 or 1800 136 089
- Australian Red Cross Tel. 1300 367 428

## Things to remember

- Keep a first aid kit at home, in the car and at work.
- You can purchase first aid kits from your local pharmacy or from providers such as St John Ambulance Australia (Victoria).
- Do a first aid course, so you know how to help if someone is injured or becomes ill.

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St John Ambulance

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