

DOC IN A BOX

First-aid kits: What to pack



Q We have one client planning a honeymoon cruise and another planning a family camping trip. Both have asked for suggestions about what types of medicines and health supplies to pack. Can you provide recommendations for customers who want to bring a first-aid kit on their vacations?

A Carrying a first-aid or medical supply kit is a great idea for all travelers because unexpected illnesses and injuries can wreak havoc on any vacation or business trip.

By planning ahead, travelers can avoid paying inflated hotel or tourist shop prices for basic items such as pain relievers and adhesive bandages and can eliminate the hassle of trying to get hard-to-find items in an unfamiliar or remote location.

Travelers should consider their destination, itinerary, season of travel and personal health condition when determining what to pack.

The following items are suggested for all travelers:

- A supply of any prescription medication currently being taken (bring extra in case of travel delay).
- An over-the-counter pain

reliever.

- A first-aid kit including bandages, scissors, tweezers, alcohol swabs and gauze
- Sunscreen (if spending time outdoors).
- Antacids and anti-diarrhea medication.
- Antibacterial ointment or cream for minor wounds.

Travelers also should think about everyday products they use but might forget to pack such as lip balm, fluoride rinse, vitamins or



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supplements, allergy medications, birth control and feminine sanitary products.

Other basic items that can be helpful to have on hand include a thermometer, throat lozenges, an antihistamine, an over-the-counter steroid cream for itching and irritation, blister protection or remedies if a fair amount of walking or sightseeing is

planned and extra glasses or contacts as a backup.

Further, travelers with pre-existing medical conditions should take any necessary medicines or supplies, such as inhalers for those with asthma and EpiPen kits or other epinephrine systems for individuals whose allergies to things such as nuts or bee stings can lead to anaphylactic shock.

Anyone planning a cruise, particularly a first-time cruise, should think about taking some form of motion sickness medication. To be effective, the medication must be taken before the trip begins.

A skin patch is a popular method, although it can have some side effects such as dry mouth and blurred vision. The patch should be applied to the skin about four hours before setting sail and will generally last up to 72 hours.

Cruise passengers and travelers to other warm, sunny destinations should stock up on the sunscreen and lip balm mentioned above; also, take along a wide-brimmed hat to protect their heads from sun exposure and to prevent heat stroke.

Plenty of insect repellent with Deet is needed for travelers venturing on a camping trip or other outdoor adventure. Other items recommended

for outdoor trips include:

- Antibiotic ointment.
- Antihistamine cream (for bug bites).
- Aloe vera lotion (soothing on stings and burns).
- Calamine lotion (drying agent for poison ivy, etc.).

There are a few additional items to add to the suitcase including for children:

- Children's versions of over-the-counter medicines such as pain relievers, antihistamines and cough medicine.
- Pedialyte or similar fluid replacement for diarrhea.
- Diaper wipes for sanitation.
- Antibacterial hand soap or sanitizer

Finally, travelers should carry their physician's contact information as well as their health insurance card and health plan contact information in case medical assistance is needed during travel.

While these items might seem like a lot to carry along, a well-packed medicine kit allows for quick and appropriate treatment, which can prevent minor problems from becoming more serious.

This column is designed to answer agent questions of general interest to the trade. Please address your questions to Dr. Connor at bcconnor@pol.net.

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