

First Aid Kit Must-Haves for Traveling

Melinda Crow | October 14, 2017 | Last updated: 12:25 PM ET, Mon October 16, 2017

Regardless of what type of travel you do, there could be bumps, bruises and bugs that befall you along the way.

It's easier to deal with them if you arrive prepared.

Keep in mind that things we take for granted at home may not be available at your destination, or at best, may be difficult to obtain. Even a simple package of acetaminophen may require lining up at the pharmacy counter in some countries.



Here's a rundown of the top things to take with you when you travel. Some are obvious, but others may surprise you:

Adhesive Bandages

An assortment of small to medium-sized bandages is the bare minimum for travel first aid. Do you really want to waste your precious travel time shopping for something to cover a tiny cut or scrape? The kind with antiseptic built-in means one less thing you need to travel with.

If hiking, extensive walking or water sports with rubber fins are part of your plans, include larger bandages and/or moleskin for blisters.

Pro tip: Because the adhesive can lose effectiveness when bandages are stored for long periods of time, make sure your kit gets replenished with fresh bandages at least annually.

Tweezers

These can do double duty for cosmetic purposes; just be sure you have a pair along on the trip for removal of small splinters or thorns.



Small Scissors

Traveling with these can be a challenge if you fly. Sharp scissors should be packed in checked luggage. If you plan to fly with carry-on luggage only, shop for a pair of non-pointed first aid scissors.

Scissors are the one thing in your travel first aid kit that you may never use, but the one thing that you may need most to manage a serious injury. Think: Tearing away clothing from a wound or cutting cloth strips for large bandages or splints.

Hemorrhoid Wipes

These wipes usually contain witch hazel for cleaning while providing cooling relief from itching, burning or stinging, but without the drying effects of alcohol. Use them for anything from insect bites to cuts and scrapes. The bonus is they often come in individual packets perfect for travel.

Assorted Zipper-Closed Plastic Bags

Besides being useful for storing items in your kit, the quart or gallon sizes are ideal for making ice packs. Snack-size bags are just right for taking a mini first aid kit of bandages or pain relievers along on short excursions or hikes.

Self-Stick Elastic Bandage Roll

This is that sticky, stretchy stuff nurses often use to hold down the cotton ball after you have had blood drawn. It is invaluable for bandaging larger wounds until you can get medical attention.

Pro tip: The veterinary version is usually cheaper than the human brands. It's called "vet wrap." Shop for it online or at your local pet supply.

Over-the-Counter Pain Medicine

As we said earlier, just getting your hands on a couple of pain relief tablets can be surprisingly difficult in some places. Pack a small bottle of your usual pain reliever, and you won't have to waste time on your trip should the need arise.

Over-the-Counter Diarrhea Medicine

This one is self-explanatory. Don't get caught with your drawers down without relief.



Aloe Vera

Aloe vera gel provides relief for sunburn, insect bites, skin rashes, poison ivy and is even a remedy for dandruff. It also works as a substitute skin moisturizer or hair conditioner if you forget to pack your usual products.

Lip Balm

Dehydration can sneak up on you when you travel, and your lips are the first part of your body to suffer for it. Even if you aren't a lip balm user at home, it may be an essential piece of your travel first aid kit.

Lip balm with sunscreen is obvious as protection for your lips, but also can be applied to the tops of ears or the bridge of your nose if you need a little extra sun protection for those areas. It can also be safely applied to small dry wounds like ragged cuticles.

Whatever You Usually Use to Combat a Cold

There is nothing worse than coming down with a cold when you are away from home. Take along the items you normally rely on the most when you are on the road. If you are worried about taking medications while you travel, consider at least packing a few nasal strips that let you breathe a little easier and a handful of throat lozenges.

Antihistamine is also a good idea, both for common cold symptoms and for possible allergic reactions to bites, stings or plants.

Your Usual Medications and Supplements

Don't forget to include anything you normally take at home. A trip is not the time to suddenly change your routine.

Talk to your doctor about vaccinations or additional medications that may be recommended for your trip, and be sure to keep all medications (even over-the-counter versions) in their original containers if you will be passing through security or customs checkpoints.