

Disaster Planning: You'll Need More Than a First Aid Kit

By Sig Swanstrom



First aid and CPR training offered by the Red Cross and hospitals, is a good place to start. But “first aid” is only the first level of care. In a major disaster or extended emergency situation, you will need more. Much more.

Standard first-aid kits, and conventional first-aid training programs, assume that you can quickly get the injured person to a hospital for treatment. Unfortunately, this may not be the case.

In a disaster or protracted emergency situation you may not have access to a doctor or hospital. Therefore, it is important to obtain first aid training, *plus* some additional emergency medical training. Likewise, a traditional first aid kit is a fine place to start, but you will need to augment it with additional supplies.

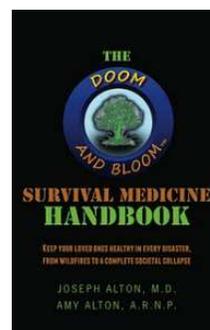
It's worth noting that most medical doctors are also not equipped to deal with the lack of access to a hospital, or at least the medical equipment of a clinic and the drugs of a pharmacy. Hopefully, doctors, nurses and other medical professionals will take the necessary steps to prepare to serve in an emergency environment, but don't count on it. It may be the ordinary person who gains the skills, and assembles the basic medical equipment, medicines and reference materials,

which will become critically important in an emergency situation.

Many aid organizations, particularly those operated by Christians, provide training for short-term mission teams who do volunteer work in developing countries. These organizations can be a great help to you, too. Through them you may be able to acquire no-nonsense medical and health training, reference materials, and advice on supplies. Remember, in a long-drawn-out emergency situation, your area may become like a Third-World community. These people are the experts.

Christian aid organizations and socially responsible publishers such as “Hesperian Health Guides” offer free PDF downloads of some of their most sought-after medical and health-care books and booklets. Purchase these materials now, or, download and print them now, as you may not have access to a computer during an emergency situation.

If you plan to download free resources, make a donation if you are able, but don't miss this opportunity to secure these important resource materials. Visit the Hesperian website to order books, as well as to download free materials such as these books: “Where There is No Doctor,” “Where There Is No Dentist,” “A Book for Midwives,” “Sanitation and Cleanliness,” and “Water For Life.” <http://hesperian.org/books-and-resources/>



If you are looking for a book to add to your medical supply kit, a great one-book resource is “The Doom and Bloom Survival Medicine Handbook,” by medical doctor Joseph Alton and his nurse wife, Amy. This can be ordered through regular book outlets such as Amazon, or directly from the Alton's website: <http://www.doomandbloom.net/>

Their www.DoomAndBloom.net website also has free video and podcasts teaching materials, and Joseph and Amy Alton also conduct survival medicine seminars around the country. Also available for purchase on their website, is various medical kits and equipment such as trauma bags and suture kits.

Another new book, but unfortunately one we've not yet had the opportunity to review, is "Armageddon Medicine, How to Be Your Own Doctor," by Cynthia Koelker, MD. <http://armageddonmedicine.net/>

If it's not practical for you to sign-up for an emergency medical class right now, at least buy the Red Cross manual, "First Aid—Responding to Emergencies." Plus, one of the two books mentioned above, and start building your Emergency Medical Supplies Kit.

As previously mentioned, a standard first-aid kit isn't enough. You need a good first-aid kit, but that is only one part of your Emergency Medical Supplies Kit. However, purchasing a first-aid kit which was designed for backpackers who hike into remote wilderness areas, is a good place to start.



Adventure Medical Kits made for those who enjoy wilderness backpacking, are great for GO Bags. These can also serve as the foundation on which to build your Emergency Medical Supplies Kit.

These first-aid kits for wilderness backpackers, such as the Adventure Medical Kit depicted in the photo, are also great for inclusion in your GO Bag

(Get-Out-Of-Dodge knapsack / evacuation kit). However, you will still need to add some additional medical and health supplies. Responding to a disaster involves more than backwoods hiking.

Retailers such as Recreational Equipment offer Adventure Medical Kits and related supplies (www.REI.com). <http://www.rei.com/search?query=adventure+medical+kit> Many of the online companies which supply police and fire departments and EMT personnel, will also sell medical supplies to the general public. (For example, BOTACH Tactical: <http://botachtactical.commerce-search.net/search?keywords=first+aid>).



"QuikClot ACS Advanced Clotting Sponge TraumaPak" are used for gunshot wounds and in other situations to stop serious bleeding. They have been used to save many lives, and 1-2 of these bandages should be included in every emergency medical kit.

Gunshot wounds and injuries involving serious bleeding, whether caused by an accident or as a result of violence, require specialized supplies for effective treatment.

The "QuikClot ACS Advanced Clotting Sponge TraumaPak" made by Z-Medica (see photo), has saved many lives because they are so effective in stopping bleeding. Every emergency medical kit should contain at least two of these QuikClot bandages and one chest-wound sealing bandage.

Military surplus stores sometimes sell genuine government-issue medic kits, and these can include these items at a much reduced price.

However, beware of damaged supplies and counterfeit knock-off kits which might contain substandard products.

Another disaster-situation injury to prepare for is dog bites. In a protracted emergency situation, abandoned pets will assemble into packs, and they will attack people, especially small children, in an attempt to secure food. Dog bites will become common, along with the more usual broken bones, cuts, and eye injuries which are routine to any emergency situation.

Keep this in mind: The contents of a typical first aid kit were selected based on the assumption that the injured person will quickly receive paramedic care, or be rapidly evacuated to a hospital's emergency department or trauma center. As a result, buying a first aid kit may be a great place to start your emergency medical preparations, but it's only a place to start. A standard first-aid kit simply isn't adequate.

In addition to specialized medical products such as QuikClot, in an extended emergency situation expect to encounter contaminated water and infection-breeding sanitation problems. This requires different supplies and training. Simple infection will likely claim more lives than the injuries themselves.

Be sure to do what you can to avoid injury and illness. Don't take unnecessary chances. Be proactive in regard to injury and disease treatment, including the treatment of small cuts and abrasions, minor injuries and ailments. Poor health also leads to poor decision making, which can result in additional health and safety dangers.

Make sanitation important. Don't just filter water, purify it. If possible, drink water throughout the day, consuming at least 1-ounce of water for each pound of body weight. (A 150-pound person should consume at least 150-ounces of water, daily). Proper hydration (electrolyte balance) is essential for maintaining health.



When walking any distance, periodically check your feet for blisters. Apply a Moleskin-type product to protect sore areas before blisters develop, or on top of blisters to help them heal and to protect against infection.

If possible, wear dry and clean socks and underwear to minimize the growth of bacteria. Don't hike in wet shoes or boots, as this can result in blisters which can burst and easily become infected.

Blisters can also develop as a result of friction between your foot and footwear, a problem further aggravated by thin socks or inadequate shoes or boots. Use moleskin or tape to protect the areas of your feet where blisters tend to form. Without proper treatment, a simple blister can develop into a debilitating injury.

Take what steps you can to avoid becoming chilled or overheated, and force yourself to eat, even when you don't feel like it. When possible, eat nutritious and balanced food, which includes protein, carbohydrates, fruit, roughage and fats. Each meal probably won't be balanced, but try to achieve balance in your day's consumption of food.

When possible, wash your hands frequently, and maintain proper health standards in your environment, particularly before eating and after relieving yourself. Bury waste to minimize contamination, and to reduce the transmission of disease by flies and other insects. Establish a habit of not touching your mouth with your hands, and not mopping the mouth area of your face with a rag or handkerchief.

If you are with other people, watch each other closely for signs of health and emotional problems; talk with each other about health issues. Prevention is better than the best treatment.

Develop an emergency medical kit which includes medical equipment as well as supplies for treatment, not just first aid; and sanitation and water purification, along with a lightweight medical reference book, in addition to an ample supply of basic items such as band aids and antibacterial soap.

If you encounter even a small cut, abrasion, or blister, be extremely aggressive in treatment. As soon as possible, scrub the affected area thoroughly with soap and clean water, apply an antibacterial treatment, and protect the injured area from contamination. Replace soiled bandages and re-clean the wound whenever it becomes necessary. Check the wound frequently for indicators of infection.

Broken bones may be splinted initially, but the bone will need to be set within a few hours. Deep wounds need to be scrubbed thoroughly, ideally with a small sterile brush made for that purpose. Bleeding needs to be stopped as blood loss can quickly create a serious health risk, even when the injury itself does not appear to be life threatening.

You may not have access to professional medical help for a very long time. Be prepared to accomplish wound treatment, suturing, and bone-setting. Your life, or the life of another, may depend on you, your training and your supplies.



If possible, add a wide-spectrum antibiotic such as Cipro (Ciprofloxacin) or Doxycycline to your Emergency Medical Supplies Kit. Get advice, and a prescription, from your physician.

Though most antibiotics only have a shelf-life of a year, it's worth asking your doctor for a prescription for a wide-spectrum antibiotic such as Cipro (Ciprofloxacin) or Doxycycline. Purchase it and keep it in your GO Bag (Evacuation or Get-Out-Of-Dodge knapsack), along with the instructions and the pharmacy label. Take note of the expiration date, and replace promptly to maintain potency. (Be sure to store medicine and all dangerous items away from children). Get instructions from your doctor, but in some situations you may want to administer an antibiotic regimen as part of the initial treatment, before the victim even has the opportunity to demonstrate symptoms of infection.

If you or a family member needs other medications, such as for a heart condition or diabetes, be sure to maintain a supply of these medications in both your GO Bag and your Emergency Supply Kit. Keep a copy of the prescription documents, and other essential medical records, in your kits.

If it's not practical to store these medications in your GO Bag and Emergency Medical Kit, attach a note to the bags with a reminder to get the medicine out of your refrigerator before leaving home. Use "Blue Ice" and an insulated bag to store medicines which require refrigeration, and keep the bag out of direct sunlight. In a vehicle, keep the medicine in the vehicle's trunk, rather

than the interior of the car which will super-heat if the vehicle is parked outside.



For centuries, essential oils have been used to aid healing. These have a place in emergency medical kits today because these healing oils can be used for a number of different purposes. For example, Clove Bud Oil is routinely used as an anti-inflammatory, but when combined with zinc oxide powder it can be used as a temporary tooth filling.

Also, don't discount the value of naturopathic remedies. Common food items such as cinnamon, honey, sea salt and baking soda, have many medical and health-improving uses. And, various organic Essential Oils have a reputation for aiding the body's natural healing processes for both injury and disease, as well as for other practical purposes.

For example, Tea Tree Essential Oil and Lavender Essential Oil are often used as an antiseptic, and for antimicrobial and antifungal treatments. Peppermint Essential Oil has been touted as useful as both an antiseptic and for antibacterial use. Clove Bud Essential Oil has been used as an anti-inflammatory, insect repellent, and even for replacing a lost filling in a tooth. (1-2 drops of Clove Bud Essential Oil, added to Zinc Oxide, will form a paste that can be used to fill a broken tooth. Bite down and hold for 10-minutes to give the compound a chance to harden.) Other foods, spices and Essential Oils have long been used for many medicinal and health-enhancing purposes. Whereas a medicine such as Neosporin is a useful

antibiotic for cuts and abrasions, one essential-oil can be used for a dozen different purposes.

Since stress and changes in eating habits often result in stomach upset, heart burn, constipation, or nausea, be sure to include remedies for these problems in your medical kit, too.

Changes in your natural environment may call for the use of sunscreen lotion, insect repellent (100% DEET), tick-removal tweezers, medical mask (particulate respirator), safety glasses, small magnifying glass, scrub brush for cleaning wounds, skin lotion, disinfectant, sanitation aides, and water purification devices or tablets. These supplies are important, too. Often used consumables such as antibacterial soap, band aids and medical gloves, need to be stockpiled in greater quantity.

Animals get injured and sick as well as humans, so don't forget these creatures as you prepare for medical emergencies and health needs. Your veterinarian, online vet supply store, or farm/ranch supply co-op can help you prepare to meet the health needs of your pet, or other animals in your care.

For lists of medical supplies which are recommended for disaster preparedness kits, refer to the *Doom and Bloom* or *Armageddon Medicine* books listed above.