

# How to Build a Car First-Aid Kit

A kit that fits in your seatback pocket can help treat injuries while traveling.

by James Stout



As an investigative journalist who's frequently on the road, I always keep a first-aid kit in my vehicle. I'm trained in wilderness medicine, basic life support and combat casualty care, and my partner is an EMT. Together, we created a kit that packs a lot into a small container, pared down to essentials that don't require extensive training to use.

## Kit Bag Compartments

Your gear is only useful if you can get to it quickly. I use a bag with several easily identifiable and accessible compartments for equipment related to bleeding, CPR, burns, wound care and splinting, and a separate pouch for medications you may need without delay, such as an **EpiPen®**. **Mystery Ranch's Med Lid (\$100)** is my go-to.



Photo: MYSTERY RANCH

## Non-Latex Gloves

Protect yourself from infection by wearing a good pair of gloves as you're dressing wounds. I pack several pairs of **Black Talon® gloves (\$40)** in a variety of sizes. They're non-latex to avoid any potential allergic reaction.

## Personal Medications

If you carry an EpiPen, glucagon or other personal medications, these should also be in your kit.

## Eye Shield and Irrigation

These can help flush a foreign object out of the eye and protect

an injured eye. Look for a bottle of solution specifically indicated for eyes, such as **Bausch + Lomb Advanced Eye Relief® Eye Wash (\$4/4 ounces)**, and a polycarbonate shield, such as the **MARCH™ Polycarb Eye Shield (\$5.50)** that you can tape over an injured eye while you travel to get a higher level of care.

## Burn Dressings

Burns can happen if you accidentally touch a hot engine or radiator or when you're lighting a campfire. **Silverlon® Burn Wrap Dressings (\$140+)** are made from nylon plated with silver, which releases ions to help keep a burn moist and infection-free. They can be worn for a week, which is great if you are in the backcountry.

## SAM® Splint

This bendable, foam-padded **aluminum splint (\$2.50-\$15)** can be used to support a broken or fractured limb or finger. It can be secured with medical tape.

## Gauze and Medical Tape

**Non-adherent Telfa™ dressings (\$21/pack of 100)** won't disrupt healing by sticking to a wound—ideal for injuries like road rash. However, they're not absorbent, so they don't work for every injury. I also bring a few 4-by-4-inch gauze pads for small wounds, such as a skin laceration. Get some cloth medical tape to hold down this and other dressings.

## Antiseptic Wipes

Use these for cleaning up and sanitizing when soap and water are not available. **VioNex™ (\$12/box of 50 wipes)** is a good brand.

## Triangle Bandages

Also called cravat bandages, these triangular pieces of cloth are hugely versatile. You can wrap and pin them (they come with safety pins) for use as a sling, a dressing, a splint and even a face mask. **Dynarex (\$10/pack of 12)** is one brand, but these types of bandages are available at most pharmacies under various brand names.

## Canine Care

If you travel with your pup, it's a good idea to carry a separate first-aid kit packed with dog-care items. Find our checklist at [subaru.com/dog-first-aid](http://subaru.com/dog-first-aid).



## Ouchie Kit

I carry a little "ouchie" kit for smaller injuries, made up of items available at any pharmacy for less than \$10 each. Mine includes a vomit bag, **Band-Aids®**, **Tylenol®** and aspirin (don't give aspirin to people who are bleeding a lot), diphenhydramine for insect bites, bee stings or mild food allergies, an antibiotic ointment such as bacitracin to prevent skin infections, hydrocortisone cream for rashes, **Imodium®** for

diarrhea, a cold pack for sprains, and adhesive butterfly closures for small wounds.

## In Case of Emergency Card (ICE)

Fill out an ICE card with any medications you take or conditions you have. The American Red Cross, which uses the term "**Emergency Contact Card**," offers a downloadable template on its website at [redcross.org](http://redcross.org).

## Where To Buy?

It's tempting to log on to Amazon, but I suggest you don't as there have been persistent issues with fake medical gear. Chinook Medical, North American Rescue, Rescue Essentials and Integrated MedCraft are trustworthy sellers.

## Step Up Your Kit

Consider this as a starting point. The next step: Sign up for a few basic first-aid classes and add items such as hemostatic gauze, tourniquets and chest seals to your kit. You can start with a free **Stop the Bleed® course** and build from there. Learn more at [stopthebleedcoalition.org](http://stopthebleedcoalition.org). ■