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## Holiday first aid kit essentials

Having the right first aid items to hand when you go on holiday can prevent a simple accident from turning into a catastrophe. So what shouldn't you leave home without?

"For most adults, an off-the-shelf kit with the basics is fine, but if there are young children, older people or anyone with specific needs, it makes more sense to create your own," says pharmacist Sultan Dajani from the [Royal Pharmaceutical Society](#). If you're travelling to remote or undeveloped parts of the world, you may also need items such as malaria tablets, a water purification kit, syringes and a thermometer.

Wherever you're going, never leave out items in the hope of getting them cheaper abroad, as it may be too late. "A first aid kit is for emergencies and prompt treatment can prevent infection or a trip to A&E. Plus, language difficulties could mean you end up with inappropriate medication," warns Dajani.

Here are the basics to include in your holiday first aid kit.

### Pain relief

Ibuprofen, aspirin or paracetamol will treat headaches and minor pains, but codeine is illegal in some countries and may be confiscated or even lead to your arrest if you don't have proof of prescription. Check the regulations of the country you're travelling to with the [embassy in the UK](#). Also make sure you have something appropriate for everyone, including children, pregnant women or anyone with a specific condition; ibuprofen can bring on asthma in some people and should also be avoided by those with stomach ulcers.

## **Antihistamine tablets and cream**

Tablets are a must for allergic reactions such as prickly heat rash or itchy insect bites. Ask for non-drowsy versions, so you don't miss out on your holiday. An antihistamine cream is great for soothing bites or rashes too.

## **Diarrhoea tablets**

Food poisoning microbes grow and reproduce faster in hot weather, making the holiday trots more likely. However, some pharmacists advise letting the illness run its course, rather than taking tablets, to allow the microbes to pass out of your system.

## **Oral rehydration salts**

Take during a bout of diarrhoea to restore the balance of fluids and natural salts in your body. This is especially important for young children and the elderly who are more vulnerable to dehydration.

## **Anti-sickness tablets**

Whether it's caused by food poisoning or motion sickness, nausea and vomiting are best treated with anti-emetic tablets that dissolve under your tongue. If it's food poisoning, try to wait for a day to allow some of the harmful microbes to leave your body. You could also try travel sickness bands or patches, and remember you may need them for some holiday activities such as sailing or train journeys.

## **Indigestion tablets**

Sometimes confused with heart attack symptoms, indigestion is more likely on holiday as you're eating a lot of different foods.

## **A mixed box of plasters**

If you're going to be doing lots of walking, add in a few blister plasters too.

## **Antiseptic cream**

Vital for preventing infection in cuts and grazes, especially in hot environments where germs multiply fast.

## Wound dressings and bandages

Bigger cuts, lacerations and minor burns need a sterile dressing to help prevent infection, while bandages can support sprains or to add pressure to wounds over a sterile dressing, stemming any bleeding.

## Instant ice pack

Pop one into your beach bag or day pack to treat sprains instantly. Prompt treatment can reduce inflammation, swelling and pain.

## Aftersun cream or aloe vera lotion

When it comes to sunburn, prevention is always better than cure. Make sure you have the right level of SPF sun cream for your skin and holiday destination - including appropriate protection for children - cover up with a hat, and avoid the sun when it's strongest. But if you do get burned, try to keep out of the sun, apply aftersun or aloe vera lotion every hour or so, and drink plenty of water.

## Other items

It's also worth packing scissors (but not in your hand luggage!) to cut bandages or tape, tweezers for removing splinters or grit from a wound, an eyewash solution for washing sand or dirt out of your eye - make sure the solution is in date to avoid infection - and an anaesthetic throat spray to soothe sore throats caused by allergies to pollen, dry air, or a virus.

## Smart tips for packing

1. Check you have enough of any prescription medication - make sure you see your GP well in advance to ask for enough to cover your holiday and when you return - plus proof of prescription from your pharmacy or GP.
2. Make sure any medication is within the date on the bottle or pack and that it's in good condition. Blister packs are better than loose tablets, which may absorb moisture from the air and become ineffective.

3. Keep painkillers, prescription meds and a few plasters in your hand luggage and pack the rest in your suitcase. If it goes AWOL, you're still covered.
4. Make sure your first aid kit is kept in a dark, waterproof container that's out of reach of children.
5. Get travel insurance. A [European Health Insurance Card](#) entitles you to state medical treatment in the EU, but this may only cover basic care and leave you liable for more expensive treatments like X-rays. Check it also covers any activities you're doing, like golf or scuba diving.

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