

Doc Talk

By Dr. Veronica Naudin



Basic First Aid: What to have - What to do

Q: My children are getting older. What should I keep in my first aid kit at home?

A: It is a great idea to have a first aid kit at home. Many parents have an assortment of supplies in the cupboard upstairs. However, I have found it useful when I am tending to my own children's injuries to have a bag or basket with all my supplies organized.

Small Cuts

For small cuts, your first step will always be to clean the wound. Soap and water work great. Also, if the wound is bleeding for more than a minute, the wound has probably already been flushed clean. Once the wound is clean, you should try to keep it dry. A packet of gauze dressing can be used to apply simple pressure to the wound, which will stop the bleeding. If the cut is very small, an application of antibacterial ointment and a band-aid should be all that is needed. For a small cut that does not need sutures or stitches, you can apply the new product 'liquid band-aid'. This product is most useful if your child does not like Band-Aids. In addition, small wound closures called steri-strips or butterfly strips can help in closing a small cut. If you are worried about the cosmetic look, you might consider consulting your pediatrician before using wound closures at home. If your small cut continues to bleed or the wound gapes open, it probably is big enough to require sutures and you should contact your pediatrician or the nearest urgent care.

Splinters and Bee Stings

You may find having a dedicated splinter or bee sting remover to be helpful. Tweezerman makes a very sharp pointed tweezers, which works very well for removing small splinters from tiny hands.

Abrasions

Abrasions are commonly known as scrapes and are common on knees and elbows. They usually sting when they are new. A gentle soap and warm water cleansing is mandatory. Sometimes, a wet, warm washcloth will help loosen any superficial debris. If particles of dirt or rocks are imbedded in the wound, you should try to remove them with your initial cleaning.

A simple dressing of an antibiotic ointment followed by Telfa non-stick gauze will keep the wound clean while it is healing. To keep the gauze on an extremity, you might consider using an ACE bandage over the gauze to keep the gauze secure. If the abrasion is very large, it increases the risk of infection. Consult your pediatrician if the abrasion does not seem to be healing after a few days. Also, if the abrasion covers large parts of more than one extremity, your child might need protection from a tetanus booster.

Burns

Simple burns can be treated initially with an ice pack to cool the burned tissue. When the wound is cool, a dressing of antibacterial ointment and Telfa gauze works well. If the tissue develops a blister, leave the blister intact for as long as possible. If the burn is large or the tissue seems charred or very white, you should consult your pediatrician for definitive care.

Broken Bones

If you think your child has broken a bone, you will want to immobilize the bone until you reach your pediatrician or urgent care. Having a sling in your first aid kit can be helpful. First aid tape works well for taping broken toes together. Small finger splints are widely available in pharmacies and medical supply stores.

In summary, this is a small potpourri of advice for basic first aid. Remember, when in you are in doubt, call your pediatrician. They love to hear from you.

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Dr. Jorge Castro, Dr. Veronica Naudin, Dr. Stanley Ambo, and Dr. Lyra Ng are dedicated to providing you with the quality health care that you desire for your children.

Please send questions and/or suggestions to:

Doc Talk, c/o PMA,
2067 Vista Way #180, Vista, CA 92083
or call: (760) 945-3434 or fax: (760) 945-6761