

ADK BACKCOUNTRY FIRST-AID KITS

Equipment Standards & Recommendations

A backcountry first-aid kit supports initial care for injuries and illnesses when professional medical assistance may be delayed. Contents should reflect group size, trip duration, remoteness, activity, environmental conditions, and leaders' medical training. Trip leaders should encourage others to bring their own first-aid kits if they are unable to provide enough supplies for the whole group.

Pack one group first-aid kit for approximately six people on a day outing or short overnight trip. Participants should carry their own required medications and prescribed emergency medications. Increase quantities for larger groups, longer trips, remote locations, and activities with increased environmental or injury risks. These quantities are starting recommendations, not a universal medical standard.

Tools & Assessment Equipment

- ✓ **Wilderness Medical Associates (WMA) Field Guide (1):** Provides a reference for patient assessment and wilderness medical care.
- ✓ **Patient Assessment Forms / SOAP Notes (3–5):** Document patient history, assessment findings, treatment, and changes in condition.
- ✓ **Incident Report Forms (2–3):** Record incidents, actions taken, witnesses, and follow-up needs.
- ✓ **Pencil and Waterproof Notebook (1):** Allow leaders to record patient information and observations in wet or cold conditions.
- ✓ **Emergency Contact Card / Emergency Action Plan (1 set):** Provides emergency contacts, communication procedures, and evacuation information.
- ✓ **Nitrile Protective Gloves (6 pairs):** Protect the patient and responder from exposure to blood and bodily fluids; carry extra pairs for longer trips.
- ✓ **Protective Eyewear (1 pair):** Protects the responder from splashes during patient care.
- ✓ **EMT or Trauma Shears (1):** Cut clothing, tape, and dressings to access injuries.
- ✓ **Tweezers (1–2):** Remove splinters and assist with small debris removal when appropriate.
- ✓ **Tick Removal Tool (1):** Supports prompt and appropriate tick removal.

- ✓ **Large Safety** Pins (4–6): Secure triangular bandages, slings, and improvised dressings.
- ✓ **Wound Irrigation Syringe (1–2):** Flush dirt and debris from wounds using clean water or appropriate irrigation fluid.
- ✓ **CPR Barrier Mask (1–2):** Provides a barrier during rescue breathing when the responder is trained to use it.
- ✓ **SAM Splint or Equivalent (1–2):** Supports immobilization of suspected fractures and other injuries when indicated.
- ✓ **Tongue Depressors or Finger Splints (2–4):** Provide simple support for finger injuries when appropriate.
- ✓ **Digital Thermometer (1):** Helps monitor temperature when illness or a cold- or heat-related condition is suspected.
- ✓ **Emergency Blanket or Lightweight Bivy (2):** Helps reduce heat loss while awaiting evacuation or managing an emergency.
- ✓ **Durable Plastic Bags or Sealable Bags (4–6):** Store contaminated materials, protect supplies, or separate wet items.
- ✓ **Soap or Hand-Cleaning Supplies (1 small container):** Supports hand hygiene and wound-care cleanliness.
- ✓ **Waterproof Lighter or Matches (1):** Provides a backup ignition source for emergency warmth or shelter when fire is safe and permitted.
- ✓ **Hand-Warmer Packs (2–4 pairs for winter trips):** Provide supplemental warmth in cold conditions; do not place directly against skin or rely on them to treat serious cold injury.

Medications & Topical Supplies

Medication availability and administration must follow organizational policy, applicable law, and the responder's training. Check allergies, contraindications, interactions, expiration dates, and package instructions. Participants should carry their own prescribed medications and emergency medications.

- ✓ **Acetaminophen (4–8 labeled doses):** Relieves pain and reduces fever when appropriate.
- ✓ **Ibuprofen (4–8 labeled doses):** Relieves pain, inflammation, and fever when appropriate; screen for contraindications.

- ✓ **Aspirin (4–5 labeled doses):** May be used in suspected heart attack situations under an appropriate emergency protocol; it is not a universal treatment for pain.
- ✓ **Oral Glucose or Glucose Gel (2–4 treatments):** Helps treat suspected low blood sugar in a conscious person who can swallow safely.
- ✓ **Antihistamine, such as Diphenhydramine (4–8 labeled doses):** May relieve some allergy symptoms but can cause drowsiness. May help but is not a substitute for epinephrine in anaphylaxis.
- ✓ **Antacid, such as Calcium Carbonate (4–8 tablets):** Relieves occasional heartburn or indigestion.
- ✓ **Antidiarrheal, such as Loperamide (2–4 labeled doses):** May help manage diarrhea in appropriate circumstances; it is not suitable for every illness.
- ✓ **Oral Rehydration Salts or Electrolyte Packets (2–4 servings):** Help replace fluids and electrolytes lost through sweating, vomiting, or diarrhea.
- ✓ **Antibiotic Ointment Packets (4–6):** Provide topical care for selected minor wounds when appropriate; clean the wound first.
- ✓ **Hydrocortisone Cream (1 small tube or several packets):** Relieves itching and inflammation from some skin irritations and bites.
- ✓ **Burn Dressings or Burn Gel Dressings (2–4):** Protect selected minor burns after appropriate cooling; serious burns require urgent medical assessment.
- ✓ **Antiseptic Prep Pads (4–6):** Support selected skin-cleaning tasks but do not replace thorough wound irrigation.
- ✓ **Eye Wash or Sterile Saline (1 small bottle or several single-use containers):** Flushes debris from the eye; penetrating injuries or persistent symptoms require urgent care.
- ✓ **Hand-Cleaning Wipes (6–10):** Support hand hygiene when soap and water are unavailable.
- ✓ **Alcohol Wipes (4–6):** Clean selected equipment or intact skin where appropriate; do not use alcohol directly inside open wounds.
- ✓ **Cold Pack (1–2 for warm-weather trips):** Provides supplemental cooling for some minor injuries; use a barrier to protect the skin.

Wound Care &

Bandaging

- ✓ **Small Adhesive Bandages, Assorted Sizes (12–20):** Cover minor cuts, scrapes, and blisters.
- ✓ **Fingertip and Knuckle Bandages (4–6):** Cover wounds in areas where ordinary bandages may not stay in place.
- ✓ **Larger Adhesive or Elastic Patch Bandages (4–6):** Cover larger scrapes or wounds.
- ✓ **Sterile Gauze Pads, 3 × 3 or 4 × 4 inches (8–12):** Clean or cover wounds and absorb blood.
- ✓ **Non-Adherent Wound Pads (4–6):** Cover wounds while reducing sticking to the wound surface.
- ✓ **Trauma Dressings or Large Absorbent Pads (2):** Cover larger wounds and help manage bleeding while direct pressure is applied.
- ✓ **Stretch Gauze Rolls, 2 inches (2):** Hold dressings in place and secure wound coverings.
- ✓ **Stretch Gauze Rolls, 3 inches (1–2):** Secure larger dressings.
- ✓ **Triangular Bandages (2–3):** Create a sling, secure a dressing, or provide improvised support.
- ✓ **Elastic Compression Bandages, 3 inches (1–2):** Provide support or compression when appropriate for a minor injury.
- ✓ **Cohesive Wrap / Vet Wrap (1 roll):** Secure dressings and support bandaging without adhesive directly on the skin.
- ✓ **Medical Tape, 1 inch (1–2 rolls):** Secure dressings and bandages.
- ✓ **Blister Supplies, Including Moleskin or Blister Pads (1 small assortment):** Reduce friction and protect hotspots or blisters.
- ✓ **Hydrogel Burn Dressings or Non-Adherent Burn Pads (2–4):** Protect selected minor burns after cooling.
- ✓ **Wound Closure Strips (1 small packet):** Support the edges of selected small, clean wounds when appropriate and within the responder's training.
- ✓ **Cotton-Tipped Applicators (4–6):** Apply topical products where appropriate; do not use them to probe deep wounds.

- ✓ **Menstrual Pads (2–4):** Provide menstrual hygiene supplies and an absorbent backup for non-sterile purposes; use appropriate wound dressings for wound care.
- ✓ **Tampons (2–4):** Provide menstrual hygiene supplies; do not use them to pack wounds.

Additional Medical Supplies

- ✓ **Commercial Tourniquet (1–2, if responders are trained):** Controls life-threatening extremity bleeding when indicated; responders must receive appropriate training.
- ✓ **Digital Watch or Timer (1):** Tracks time during patient monitoring and helps document changes.
- ✓ **Headlamp (1):** Provides hands-free lighting for patient assessment and treatment after dark.
- ✓ **Duct Tape (1 small roll):** Supports temporary repairs to equipment and some improvised splinting applications.
- ✓ **Waterproof Kit Bags (1–2):** Keep supplies dry and separate medical items from wet clothing or gear.
- ✓ **Participant Medication Reminder or screening Checklist (1 set):** Helps leaders confirm that participants have required personal medications and emergency plans while respecting privacy.

Backpacking & Hiking: Additional Equipment

- ✓ **Expanded Blister Prevention and Treatment Supplies (1 kit):** Helps manage a common hiking problem before it limits mobility or contributes to evacuation.
- ✓ **Extra Wound Dressings and Gauze (Increase for trip length):** Provides enough supplies for repeated wound care when help may be hours or days away.
- ✓ **Emergency Bivy or Shelter (1–2 group units, plus appropriate individual emergency provisions):** Provides protection from wind, rain, and heat loss during an unplanned stop.



- ✓ **Satellite Communicator or Emergency Beacon (At Least 1 reliable group device, with a backup plan):** Allows emergency communication where cellular service is unavailable.
- ✓ **Paper Map, Compass, and/or GPS (1–2):** Supports navigation and helps communicate the group's location to rescuers.
- ✓ **Water Treatment Method (1 primary system plus backup where appropriate):** Helps provide safe drinking water if the trip runs longer than expected.
- ✓ **Extra Food and Drinking Water:** Helps maintain energy and hydration if travel is delayed and provided to participants who may have forgotten
- ✓ **Repair Kit (1):** Supports temporary repairs to packs, shelter, footwear, and essential equipment.
- ✓ **Waste Bags and Hand Hygiene Supplies:** Support sanitation and safe handling of contaminated materials.

Winter Hiking, Skiing, & Snowshoeing: Additional Equipment

- ✓ **Extra Insulated Gloves or Mittens (1 spare pair per participant where practical):** Helps protect against cold exposure if gloves become wet or lost.
- ✓ **Extra Warm Hat and Socks (1 spare set per participant where practical):** Provides dry insulation during delays or cold-related incidents.
- ✓ **Emergency Shelter or Bivy (1–2 group units, plus individual insulation):** Helps reduce heat loss if the group must stop unexpectedly.
- ✓ **Extra Insulation Layers:** Helps prevent and manage cold exposure.
- ✓ **Waterproof Fire-Starting Supplies (1 backup set):** May support an emergency warmth plan where conditions, skills, and regulations permit.
- ✓ **Insulated Water Containers:** Help reduce freezing and support hydration.
- ✓ **Snow Shovel, Traction, and Winter Travel Equipment (Appropriate to the route and conditions):** Support safe travel and emergency response in snow and ice.
- ✓ **Goggles and Eye Protection (dependent on season)** Protect the eyes in blowing snow, wind, and intense reflected sunlight.

Winter priority:

Prevention is critical.

Carry enough dry insulation and emergency shelter to manage an unplanned stop and ensure leaders can recognize and respond to hypothermia and frostbite. A first aid kit alone cannot keep a cold patient warm.

Camping & Overnight Trips: Additional Equipment

- ✓ **Larger Wound-Care Resupply (Based on group size and trip length):** Provides enough dressings and cleaning supplies for repeated care over multiple days.
- ✓ **Extra Handwashing and Sanitation Supplies:** Help reduce illness transmission and support safe food handling.
- ✓ **Water Purification Backup (1 backup method):** Provides a second option if the primary filter or treatment system fails.
- ✓ **Emergency Lighting (1 headlamp per leader, plus spare batteries):** Allows patient assessment and camp management after dark.
- ✓ **Shelter and Sleeping Insulation:** Protect the group if someone is injured or evacuation is delayed.
- ✓ **Food-Storage Equipment (As required by local rules and wildlife conditions):** Reduces wildlife encounters and supports safe camp practices.
- ✓ **Waste Bag:** Support responsible disposal and carrying out contaminated waste.
- ✓ **Repair Supplies (1 compact kit):** Support temporary repairs to tents, sleeping systems, stoves, and packs.

Cycling: Additional Equipment

- ✓ **Extra Trauma Dressings and Gauze (2–4 additional dressings):** Provide coverage for abrasions and larger wounds after a fall.
- ✓ **Extra Nitrile Gloves (2–4 pairs):** Protect responders during roadside or trail-side patient care.
- ✓ **Compact Emergency Blanket (1–2):** Helps reduce heat loss if an injured rider is waiting for evacuation.
- ✓ **Medical Tape and Cohesive Wrap (1 each):** Secure dressings where movement and clothing may dislodge them.

- ✓ **Eye Protection (1 pair for the responder):** Protects against debris and fluid exposure during treatment.
- ✓ **Multi-Tool and Tire Repair Kit (1 cycling repair kit):** Addresses common mechanical problems that could strand riders.
- ✓ **Lights and Reflective Gear (As required by the route and conditions):** Improve visibility during low-light conditions or unexpected delays.

Cycling priority: Keep the medical kit compact, weather-protected, and accessible. Plan for traffic exposure, group separation, mechanical failures, and emergency-service access to the route.

Paddling & Water-Based Activities: Additional Equipment

- ✓ **Waterproof First Aid Bag or Dry Bag (1+):** Protects medical supplies from immersion and spray.
- ✓ **Extra Nitrile Gloves (2–4 pairs):** Support hygienic patient care when supplies may become wet or contaminated.
- ✓ **Large Absorbent Dressings (2–4):** Cover larger wounds and help manage bleeding.
- ✓ **Emergency Blanket or Dry Insulating Layer (1–2 group backups):** Helps reduce heat loss after immersion or during a delay.
- ✓ **Dry Clothing and Shelter Plans:** Helps prevent cold exposure after capsizing or unexpected immersion.
- ✓ **Whistle and Reliable Communication Device (1 each):** Support signaling and coordination during an emergency.
- ✓ **Personal Flotation Device (PFD) (1 each, properly fitted, approved PFD per participant):** Provides essential flotation and must be worn according to activity and organizational policy.
- ✓ **Throw Bag and Rescue Equipment (As required by the waterway and leader training):** Support trained water-rescue procedures; equipment should only be used by people trained to use it.
- ✓ **Boat-Specific Repair Kit (1):** Supports temporary repairs that may prevent stranding or additional hazards.
- ✓ **Water-Rescue and Evacuation Plan (1 documented group plan):** Establishes emergency roles, communication, and evacuation options before launching.



Paddling priority:

Keep the medical kit secured in a waterproof container that remains accessible. Prioritize prevention of immersion and hypothermia, and ensure leaders are trained for the specific water conditions and rescue procedures.

Pre-Trip Inspection & Restocking Checklist

Before every outing, the designated leader should:

- ✓ Confirm the kit is present, accessible, and appropriate for the activity.
- ✓ Check quantities, expiration dates, packaging, and sterile supplies.
- ✓ Replace used, damaged, wet, or missing items.
- ✓ Confirm the kit is waterproofed where needed.
- ✓ Verify that required communication devices are charged and functioning.
- ✓ Review the group emergency action plan and evacuation options.
- ✓ Confirm leaders know where the kit is and are trained to use its contents.
- ✓ Remind participants to carry required personal medications and emergency medication.
- ✓ Add seasonal or activity-specific supplies based on the forecast, terrain, water conditions, and trip length.
- ✓ Restock immediately after an incident or outing where supplies were used.

General Recommendations

1. **Match supplies to training.** Carry equipment that leaders know how to use and maintain proficiency with.
2. **Prioritize prevention and evacuation.** A kit cannot replace adequate clothing, shelter, hydration, communication, route planning, or emergency decision-making.
3. **Plan for delayed rescue.** Remote trips may require care for several hours or longer before professional help arrives.
4. **Keep supplies organized.** Use labeled, waterproof pouches for tools, wound care, medications, and activity-specific equipment.



5. **Protect** **participant privacy.**

Collect only the health information needed for safe participation and emergency response and store it according to organizational policy.

6. **Review with a qualified instructor.** Have a Wilderness First Aid or Wilderness First Responder instructor or medical advisor review the kit against your organization's activities, training, and emergency protocols.

Review note: This is a planning template, not a clinical protocol. Final kit contents, medication policy, and emergency procedures should be approved by the organization's qualified medical or wilderness-medicine advisor.