

FIRST AID TIPS

Minor cuts, scrapes, sprains, or burns require proper care to avoid infection and other complications. To be prepared, keep a first-aid kit in your home. You can buy one from a drug store or you can make your own. Suggested items to include:

1. Gauze pads
2. Bandages
3. Band-aids
4. Adhesive tape
5. Disposable gloves
6. Scissors
7. Antibiotic ointment
8. Antiseptic solution
9. Absorbent cotton
10. Pain medication
11. Tweezers
12. Safety pins

To treat minor injuries in your home, follow these guidelines:

I. Minor Cuts and Abrasions

- Stop the bleeding by applying pressure with a clean cloth, tissue, or gauze pad.
- Clean area around the wound with mild soap and cool water. Remove any dirt with tweezers that have been wiped with alcohol.
- Pat the wound dry with a clean cloth.
- For most small wounds, keeping them dry and exposed to air will make them heal faster. However, if the wound can easily become wet or dirty, cover it with a protective bandage and change the dressing daily.
- Seek medical help if redness, swelling, pus, or fever develops. Check with your physician regarding the need for a tetanus shot. A wound, even if minor, can lead to a tetanus infection, which

causes stiffness of jaw muscles, convulsions, and difficulty breathing.

II. Sprains and Strains

A sprain is an injury to the ligaments that holds bones together at a joint, e.g. a twisted ankle, knee, wrist, or finger. A strain is the stretching or tearing of the muscles or tendons that attach muscle to bone, often caused by lifting of a heavy object or overworking a muscle.

Prevention

- Maintain physical fitness.
- Stretch muscles before and after exercise.
- Practice strength training exercises to strengthen weak muscles. Your physician or physical therapist can provide you with the instructions.
- Wear protective equipment when playing sports and choose the right sporting shoes.

Treatment (R.I.C.E. Therapy)

- **REST** — Stop using the injured part as soon as you realize an injury has taken place to prevent further injuries.
- **ICE** — Cold helps stop bleeding from injured blood vessels, reduces pain and swelling. Place ice cubes in a plastic bag and wrap it with a thin towel. Place the ice pack over the injured area for no more than 20 minutes and repeat every 2 to 3 hours. You may use heat treatment after 24 hours (low heat). Remember to apply cold first then heat.
- **COMPRESSION** — Compression helps to control swelling and promotes healing. Wrap the injured area firmly with an elastic bandage. Be sure that bandage is not too tight. Always check for signs of impaired circulation, i.e. numbness, pain, cramping, changes in skin color and temperature.
- **ELEVATE** — Raise the injured part above heart level, if possible, to decrease pain and swelling.

Contact your physician if pain or swelling worsens.

III. Minor Burns

Prevention

- Wear sunscreen and protective clothing outdoors to prevent sunburn.
- Use pot holders when handling hot handles or cookware.

- Turn handles of pots and pans away from the stove to prevent accidental spilling of hot liquids.
- Temperature of water heater should not be set too high in order to prevent scalding.

Treatment

- Cool the burned area with large amounts of cold (not ice) water until pain and swelling lessen. Do not use ice pack. Apply cold compresses if affected area cannot be immersed in water.
- Cover the burned area with dry, clean dressings to help prevent infection. Do not apply any home remedies such as cream, oil, butter, or soy sauce since these can seal in heat or cause infection.
- Do not break blisters.

Seek medical attention if there is broken skin, swelling, blistering, or oozing fluids.

If you are not sure what to do when faced with an injury, whether minor or major, contact your physician immediately.