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FIRST AID TO GO

New ready-made kits let you tote the antidote for basic boo-boos

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Fall is full of campfire burns, splinters, cuts and scrapes, and if you are the first responder for most of your family's medical emergencies, you probably know where most of the supplies you might need for those emergencies are — or at least where they're supposed to be.

But what happens if your child gets a cut on the soccer field or a bee sting on a class field trip? Don't worry. Fort Worth's Chisholm Trail chapter of the American Red Cross just made your job a whole lot easier.

Working with **PICKPAK** First Aid, the chapter has designed disposable first-aid packets based on the kind of emergency packages used in hospitals. The individual packets include all the various components needed to deal with a particular emergency and step-by-step directions.

Supplies are bundled together, in the order they are to be used (first things on top). The sterile package has a "breathable" label that allows you to compress most of the kits into flat envelopes to fit easily in your car's glove compartment or boat, or even the back pocket of your jeans.

For example, the "**WOUNDPaK**" is designed for first-aid care of minor cuts, abrasions and lacerations. The packet includes non-adherent gauze pads on top with the instruction to hand them to the victim to put pressure on his or her own wound, while you put on the latex-free gloves found under the pads.

Next comes the stretch gauze wrap, which you are instructed to wrap around the pads and secure with a knot. If bleeding continues, you are to break open another packet and add pads and gauze. You are advised to keep direct pressure on the wound until it stops bleeding.

Finally, there are directions for disposing of your gloves in the biohazard waste bag and cleaning your hands with the antiseptic hand wipes (bag and wipes are included in all the different packets).

"It keeps you from having to search through loose supplies, and the individual sterile packages maximize infection control by preventing cross-contamination," says Mickey Mason, director of preparedness for the Red Cross chapter in Fort Worth.

Each packet also reminds you to make sure the area is safe (as in, not swarming with bees) and to question the victim (as in, "Are you OK?") as you approach.

And the packets are available for sale individually from the Red Cross for \$3.40 to \$11.75, as well as customized combinations for about \$55, even if you haven't taken a Red Cross training course.

"I just love these packs. They take the guesswork out of first aid," says Jackie Brown, human resources director for Region XI Education Service Center, who is in charge of 10 emergency responders at the center, which often hosts 500 teachers for continuing-education meetings.

"I call it first aid for dummies," Brown says. "When I came across these, I thought, I don't care

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how much they cost, if there are people counting on me to handle an emergency, I want to know what to do and have everything I need to do it."

To purchase the packets, which are available by mail or at the Chisholm Trail Red Cross, 1515 S. Sylvania Ave., Fort Worth; or for more information, call 817-335-9137 or go to www.chisholmtrail.redcross.org.