

A Case for First Aid Kits

By Ted Muir

Health and safety are top of mind for most wood workers. We follow many if not all of the best safety practices highlighted in the [2023 October issue](#) of the Greater Vancouver Woodturning Guild's newsletter (Working Alone in the Shop). This compilation of practices and advice touched on the importance of having a first aid kit in our workshops, leaving us to ask what should be in a first aid kit? That question was put to a few west coast turners with working experiences with first aid kits. Here's what they had to say.

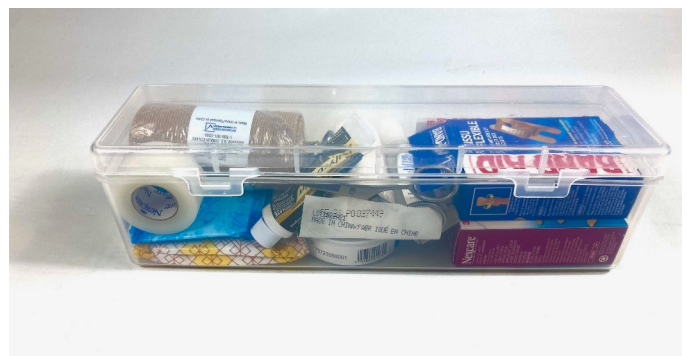
First Aid Kit Options

Many of us have basic generic first aid kits around the house or in our shops. Oddly enough some of us do not know what's in them or oftentimes are unable to find what we need in a time of crisis. Generally, they are of limited value. However, if you like the idea of owning a commercial kit do your homework and see what's available to suit your needs. Wood working groups may find it prudent to stock a store-bought kit from a due diligence standpoint; assuming members are on site who know how to use it properly. St John's Ambulance sells a variety of kits ranging in price from \$20 to \$200. Most reputable tool and safety equipment suppliers sell kits.



Homemade kits:

For most of us, a basic first aid kit is one that we can make ourselves for under \$50. The advantage of this approach is that you will know exactly what it contains and have an inkling of the expiry date of its contents. Choose a kit container that is accessible in an emergency, airtight (to keep out moisture, germs and dust), durable and easy to open. A snap down food container or a repurposed first aid kit pouch are options to consider. If you stop heating your shop in winter months you may want to relocate the kit to a warm location.



Kit content suggestions:

Bandages: Bandages are the mainstay of every basic first aid kit. Stock a variety of shapes and sizes. Sizes as big as 1 ¾ by 4 inches are sometimes called for. Consider buying brand names as they tend to last longer - watch out for sales in your local drugstore. If you are prone to finger injuries consider buying four-pronged (knuckle) bandages as they handle hard to cover areas and adhere well. You may have to go online to get these. If you like buying in bulk and anticipate a high turnover of stock check out the bandage kits at Costco. Think about sharing bandages and other duplicate supplies with fellow wood workers.

Pressure bandages: These are intended for serious bleeds and most likely need to be purchased online. [Canadian Safety Supplies](#) carries a First Aid Central brand worth considering. The 4 in. by 6.5

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)



in. compression bandage comes with elastic ties that eliminate the need for pins or tape to hold it in place. Military grade compression bandages consisting of a dressing pad and a self-applied wrap can also be purchased on line. As an alternative, consider purchasing a package of panty liners-available in small quantities in your drugstore. They come in different thicknesses (scent free and wingless are best) and are sealed individually. Use an ample amount of tape or elastic roll to keep pressure bandages firmly against the wound.

The most serious of injuries, those involving arterial bleeding, call for the application of direct pressure (with fingers or a pressure bandage) on the artery leading to the injury to stop the bleeding. This is where having had first aid instruction covering pressure points on arteries pays dividends.

Once a serious hand bleed injury is under control try to keep your hand elevated above your head as high as you can until help is reached. Your body will attempt to slow the flow of blood to wounded elevated extremities.

Gauze and adhesive tape: Gauze is available in rolls and pads. Gauze and tape, along with elastic bandage wrap rolls with clips are generally useful for a variety of tasks. Some of the wraps now come with Velcro fasteners.

Scissors and tweezers: You may be able to sequester these items from old kits or from the medicine cabinet (with Significant Other approval). A utility knife blade or scalpel blade (taped at one end) makes for a useful cutting edge.

Hydrogen peroxide: Peroxide may be useful to

flush a minor wound before applying a bandage. It comes in small bottles. Keep in mind that the priority in a serious accident is to stop the bleeding and get help as quickly as possible. A serious wound can be cleaned later by a health professional.

Eye drops: A 30 ml container of Clear Eyes or other sterile eye liquid would be useful to flush your eye to remove particles or relieve distress. Do not rub an injured eye. Any and all eye injuries must be promptly addressed by professionals.

Ointments: Ointments with antibiotics such as Polysporin may be useful for those small scrapes, cuts and burns that are slow to heal. Ointments treat infection and help speed healing.

Tourniquet: The consensus here is that the use of a tourniquet is best left to those trained in its proper use. Improper use may cause more damage than good. Once you are comfortable using one, a Turnkey Tourniquet is recommended. They are inexpensive and can be purchased online.



Cell telephone: Okay, no one keeps a cell phone in a first aid kit. However, you should always have one on you while plying your craft. If you become seriously injured and/or restricted in movement you will need to call for help immediately. You don't want trying to get to a phone somewhere else to be your last move.

Further enlightenment

Wood working groups would be well served to host a First Aid training course for their members. Many clubs have assigned safety officers for working events and presumably taken the time to itemize their responsibilities. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could share those responsibilities with other clubs, along with this list or a modification of it?

Special thanks to Al Lundgren who did much of the heavy lifting in developing this piece. Ed Pretty and several members of the Comox Valley Woodturners Society also offered valuable input. - Ted Muir