

Medical Kit recommendations

From Moe Roddy

Single handed offshore medical kit...

I could go nuts with what we should all carry in our medical kits...but since we are sailing short handed there is a lot of medical care that we just aren't going to be able to do very well on ourselves, all though there are cases of people who have had to treat themselves for serious life threatening injuries. My thinking with this list is the minimum you should have on board until you can get to Bermuda to treat a medical emergency, or until another competitor can reach you...so here goes...

For myself, on The Red Dress, I carried a cheap medical kit from West Marine...it had all the basics and I added to it where I saw fit. In 2004, I was the Medical officer on a race boat with a crew of 14 in the Newport Bermuda race. For that race I had put together an extensive kit, but I was responsible for 14 other people and I knew how to use the equipment etc. I had everything from suture supplies to IV's. The only thing I used was a set of tweezers to pull a splinter out of a crew member on the dock before the start of the race. But if I needed to take an appendix out I certainly had the capability (not that I would, I would have loaded the poor bugger up on antibiotics and prayed for a faster passage). I recently did a transatlantic from South Africa and once again, I had an extensive kit. But keep in mind we were also far from help for a very extended period of time. We don't have that problem with this race, so start with a basic kit and go from there.

If you have a medical condition that requires prescription medication, make sure you have extra medication in your ditch bag.

I'll list this via systems...starting with the head

If you are knocked unconscious at any time and you wake up... you need to call on your radio or sat phone or single side band and get linked up with a physician who can make an assessment of your neurological status.

For all other head bangs...

Cold packs (the kind that are activated by squeezing them and mixing the water in them with chemicals to make them cold, if you have refrigeration you can substitute anything cold in the fridge, but these cold packs are cheap and you can have them a long time and they even work if your batteries die and you lose everything in your fridge, keep one or two of them in your ditch bag too)

Ears:

Antibiotic ear drops (here's a tip...take your ear lobe between your fingers and wiggle your ear...if it causes you more pain, chances are you have an outer ear infection, otitis externa)

Auragan ear drops for outer ear pain

Oral antibiotics

Eyes

Eye wash

Antibiotic eye drops or ointment (not a bad idea to carry sterile eye gauze in case you scratch your cornea)

You don't have to have, but I like to have, an analgesic eye drop. If you do opt for this be careful not to cause further injury to your eye by touching your eye after you numb it

Mouth

Chap Stick

Gum analgesic

Extra toothbrush

GI

Anti nausea medicine...I like pepto bismol..works for both nausea and diarrhea

Imodium (for diarrhea)

Prescription suppository for nausea (always good to have in case you are too sick to take anything by mouth, including medication)

Bonine or something like that for sea sickness

Laxative of some kind

Electrolyte packs to mix with water

GU

Antibiotics for urinary tract infection

For males on high blood pressure medication, sometimes you can develop a problem with urinary retention. You may want to consider carrying a urinary catheter on board but make sure you get instructions from your doctor how to use it.

Skin

Sun block

Hats

Telfa non stick gauze pads

Silvadene antibiotic ointment for burns

1% hydrocortisone cream

Caladryl

Bactraban antibiotic ointment or triple antibiotic over the counter ointment

Good pair of tweezers

Lacerations

Gauze pads (a box of 4x4's)

Hydrogen peroxide

Tape

(FYI, head wounds tend to be scarier than they really are...there is a lot of blood flow in the head to make sure that brain of yours is getting plenty of oxygen. so when you get a cut on the head there is always a lot of blood....same thing in the mouth, don't panic, just put pressure on the wound to stop the bleeding and then make a good assessment of the cut when the bleeding stops)

Nose packing if you tend to have nose bleeds

Super glue (works great for small lacerations)

Steri strips (but you should also have benzoine bullets to use with these, otherwise they don't stick)

Rubbing Alcohol

Betadine is ok but you really don't have to have it and it's expensive...some surgeons I work with actually use good old fashion alcohol for prepping the skin (they are the special surgeons as alcohol is not allowed in OR anymore because they can spark fires with cautery)

Bones

Splints, finger, arm and leg (sail battens make pretty good splints)

Ace wraps at least 2 4 inch wraps and maybe a 6 inch wrap incase you need to wrap your leg

Those ice packs again

Warm packs

Narcotics of some kind for pain

General OTC

Ibuprophen or Tylenol

Aspirin

Cold medication (non drowsy)

Oral benadryl

Prescription

Wide spectrum antibiotics (don't go to crazy as this is a 650 mile race)

Your own prescription medications and extras (again, don't forget to put some in your ditch bag along with sea sickness medication)

Tylenol with codeine

Vicodin or some other narcotic that you know you are not allergic to and could take the edge off pain from a broken bone etc....

Other things to consider

Thermal blankets are handy and not real expensive

If you have a tendency to dislocate shoulders, knees etc...discuss with your doctor the idea of carrying Valium or some other muscle relaxer to improve your chances of reducing the dislocated bone....

If you or your crew has serious anaphylactic allergies an epi pen is a must

Hope this helps, it is meant to be a starting point and it really is the bare minimum...if you have considered carrying an AED remember that it will only be useful close to land and you will never be able to use in on yourself. If anyone else has useful ideas to offer please feel free