



St. John Ambulance

SAVING LIVES
at work, home and play

The Bandage Solution

What Should Your Workplace First Aid Kit Contain?

If your workplace is like most in Ontario, you will be on the hunt for a bandage when you get a simple paper cut. Why do you go on these investigative searches? Because the adhesive bandage is the most commonly used piece of first aid equipment and the most commonly hoarded item among employees who don't want to do the search each time they get the simple paper cut.

It is the law to have a first aid kit in the workplace, stocked according to First Aid Regulation 1101. It is also the law that this kit be checked on a quarterly basis and restocked to the standard as necessary. Adhesive bandages for simple cuts will be the most common item you will replace. Some employers invest in dispensers that release bandages individually so the adhesive is exposed and must be used immediately. This can help prevent hoarding but these dispensers can be expensive.

A common question by employers is, "what type of bandages should we have –fabric or plastic?" The answer is, "both". Fabric is often the bandage of choice as it is more flexible and tends to stick better. However, some people are allergic to the fabric so they must use plastic. The standard straight style is the most versatile, but other types such as fingertip or knuckle bandages have shapes that are designed to stay on rounded surfaces or joints that are often bent throughout the day. Specialty bandages are available for employees in food manufacturing facilities. They are usually bright blue in colour, detectable by special machines to prevent food contamination, are waterproof and have stronger adhesives.

Another common question is whether employers should have medications available. For liability reasons, employers are encouraged to stay away from supplying items such as antiseptic creams, aspirin, acetaminophen and other over the counter medications. Such medications could mask the symptoms of more serious conditions, delaying medical attention. Alternatively, employers can

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consider having these items added to office vending machines so they are available for purchase but not actually dispensed by the employer.

Checking your kit on a quarterly basis is not just an exercise in restocking used items. Some first aid contents have expiry dates so even if they are not used, they need to be replaced. To extend the life of your first aid kit supplies work with vendors that provide items that are individually wrapped.

To find out more about what your workplace first aid kit must contain check Regulation 1101 at: www.wsib.on.ca or www.shopfirstaid.ca.

Submitted by Dianne Rende, Executive Director of St. John Ambulance, Peel Dufferin Branch. As Canada's leading authority in first aid, St. John Ambulance is dedicated to improving health and safety at work, at home and at play. Dianne can be reached by email at dianne.rende@on.sja.ca or for more information visit www.sja.ca.

