



street medicine: what is it?

citizen emergency support

in the case of demonstrations, unrest, natural disasters, accidents. sometimes you have to wait for emergency services, and sometimes they're not available. anything you can do to be prepared, be of service, and to spread calm is useful!

citizen community support

in the case of natural disasters, encampments, working with the homeless or just being neighborly, and of course just self-sufficiency – especially in the case of disasters, there's not enough emergency services or community services to fill the need – and, those services have also been affected by the disaster! hospitals may have been destroyed and if not, they're overflowing. it's ok to take care of ourselves! even when it's not an emergency, just neighborly support and care builds community! not very long ago, neighborhoods took care of their elderly and infirm: today these people are often alone and rely on ambulances and emergency services.

water and bandaids

if you can clean a wound and put a bandaid on it, you're helpful! no special training required!

spread calm

just having a level head and being creative to meet people's needs – example: two out-of-towners got separated by a march. one was elderly and the other was terribly worried about her. reuniting them didn't require any health care skills, just a level head!

WFR and other training

this is super useful, but if you don't have that, you can still be helpful. also keep in mind, much of the emergency skills training assumes that you will just stabilize a person until you can get them to the ER: remember, there might not be any higher definitive care available!

kits: be prepared!

daily bag

a small but robust first aid kit you carry with you every day, wherever you go. have you ever noticed, there are no first aid kits in the subway??

street kit

a larger kit that you can carry for the specific purpose of providing aid, whether you're at a march, at an encampment, or just heading out to downtown crossing to spend the afternoon with the homeless. remember to save a spot for self-care items!



go bag

a kit you have prepared in case of an evacuation – this might be your street kit. make sure that you keep it restocked all the time! this can also include personal items such as a change of clothing, trail food, water treatment, copies of paperwork, etc.

kit contents

the number of each of these things will vary depending on what kit you are building, but these are the basic ingredients:

gloves

gloves keep gunk off – if you're dirty, they provide instant "clean hands", and if your injured person is bleeding, they keep the blood off you.

bandages

bandaging is the "sexy" part: trauma care. it's super useful to be a good bandager, so we recommend these youtube videos and lots of practice.

you'll find a selection of useful tutorials here:

www.commonwealthherbs.com/herbstalk

a good bandage will stand up to stress (and might have to), and still allow appropriate movement: a bad bandage can fall right off. learn how to do it right!

stitches are not appropriate: unless you're in a sterile environment, you would be stitching pathogens INTO the wound. instead, use appropriate wound wash and herbs, and compression-wrap it, or use steri-strips if they're available. make sure you learn how to compression wrap, because steri-strips will only last as long as the petroleum does!

we recommend an assortment of gauze pads, various sizes of roller gauze, triangle bandages, self-occlusive bandages ("vet wrap"), tape, and perhaps an ace bandage. bandaids, steri-strips, and tegaderm are also very useful!

of course, you can also improvise: rip up a piece of clean clothing for bandages, clean socks for blood absorption, cardboard for a splint, etc.

handy tools

tweezers (get a GOOD pair), trauma shears, a good knife, needle or pin, method of irrigation (squirt bottle, spray bottle, irrigation syringe), a SAM splint, extra plastic bags, ponytail holders. a good steel nit comb is very useful for long-term care with compromised sanitation.



herbs: do more with less!

in a long-term situation (even just one day on the street), weight matters. packing your herbs carefully, so that every herb has multiple uses, means that you can carry less weight. of course, it's also handy to know the plants in the area you're working in so that you can just harvest things as you need them, but that's not always possible.

salve

calendula/plantain/pine resin salve – antiseptic, vulnerary, anti-fungal, lymphatic. appropriate for wounds, burns, cuts, abrasions, chilblains, fungal infections. also at the base of the nose for respiratory infection.

powders

cinnamon – dysentery, blood sugar regulation (in a case where no type 2 meds are available, or to reduce need for insulin if there is shortage. make sure to test glucose levels regularly!), anti-spasmodic, anti-fungal, warming for respiratory infection, mucilaginous.

cayenne – vital force stimulant, heart attack, styptic (though as a last resort, as powder in wounds is less desirable), arthritic pain, carminative

activated charcoal – turns everything black but works! draws infection, venom. binds to contaminants/poisons. dysentery, food poisoning, staph, etc

dry herbs

linden – just add cold water for dehydration, nervous exhaustion, panic attack, angina, fever, sun burn, eye wash

marshmallow – dehydration, GI distress, sun burn, ulcers, kidney action, vulnerary

wound wash

rose water – very stable, antiseptic, vulnerary, eye wash. also can be used internally for depression or anxiety

thayer's rose water witch hazel – alcohol free. same as above but not internally

vinegar – apple cider vinegar with herbs added (thyme, rosemary, sage, oregano, etc). it'll sting but you'll be clean! also digestive stimulant



essential oil

lavender – muscle relaxant, respiratory (“steam” in a bottle), disinfectant, in water or vinegar for sunburn, in salve, oil, or honey for burns.
emergency water treatment

tinctures (simples)

lobelia – anaphylaxis, asthma attack, allergic reactions, muscle relaxant, nervous system relaxant, emetic

barberry – antiseptic, mucous membrane tonic, dysentery, oral abscess

tulsi – anxiety/panic/trauma/PTSD, respiratory infection, blood sugar regulation, fever, PMS - mood

betony – headache, concussion, depression, PTSD, dissociative disorders, brain fog, digestive

yarrow – styptic, disinfectant, hemostatic (in particular if shortage of blood pressure meds, and for hemorrhage), febrifuge, respiratory infection, digestive bitter, nervous system support, oral care

ginger – antispasmodic, anti-emetic, GI distress/cramping, PMS - cramping, respiratory ailments esp cough, anti-inflammatory

uva ursi – astringent, esp to urinary and reproductive systems. oral care, esp gums, GI distress/diarrhea

solomon’s seal – joint injury, respiratory distress, mental/emotional fortitude in rapidly changing situations

spray bottle of LAW

LAW stands for “liquid antacid and water”. use unflavored milk of magnesia (aluminum hydroxide/magnesium hydroxide) with no potassium, peroxide, or alcohol added. mix 50-50 with good water (don’t pre-mix, it’s not stable for long-term storage). spray into the eyes (gently) to counteract tear gas and pepper spray – may require several applications. also good for mucous membranes and skin

container of honey

good quality local honey can be used on burns and wounds, as well as mixed into a tincture to make it more palatable to a child.

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