

The well-stocked medicine cabinet

From first aid to fever relief, here's what every family should have on hand

researched by LOUISE GLEESON

Toothpaste

Two kinds of toothpaste? Yes — one for adults and older kids, and a no-fluoride type for those too little to spit (see "Need-to-Know Basics," p. 124).



Saline drops and nasal bulb or aspirator

Helps relieve stuffy noses.



Rubbing alcohol

To clean thermometer between uses.



Toothbrushes all around!

An appropriately sized toothbrush is a must for each member of the family (check packaging for age recommendations). To protect gums, choose the softest bristles available.

Calamine lotion or natural alternative: calendula cream

To calm itchy rashes.

Antibiotic ointment or natural alternatives: oregano oil, grapefruit seed extract or tea tree oil
To treat minor cuts and scrapes.

Medicine dispenser
Lost the dispenser that came with your child's medication? Most pharmacists will give you an oral syringe or dosing cup free of charge.



Antihistamine
To ease discomfort of insect bites, hives and minor food allergies.

Digital thermometer
A rectal or oral thermometer provides the most accurate reading (see "Need-to-Know Basics," p. 124).

Gauze and surgical tape
For boo-boos too big for a plastic bandage to cover. You can also wrap gauze around your finger to clean baby's gums and new teeth.

Tweezers
For removing splinters.

Kid-friendly plastic bandages

Dental floss
Kids need to start flossing (with adult help) when their teeth touch one another.



Petroleum jelly
Use to lubricate thermometer for rectal temperature taking; it's also a great balm for upper-lip owies caused by a runny nose, and a barrier cream for diapering.

Acetaminophen or ibuprofen in adult, child and infant formulations
For pain and fever relief (see "Need-to-Know Basics," p. 124).

Pass it up

Your grandma probably considered it a must-have to induce vomiting if a child has swallowed something toxic. And, yes, the local doctor credited Anne of Green Gables' administration of ipecac with saving little Minnie Mae Barry's life. But today health care professionals caution that you should never use ipecac.

That's because pretty much anything dangerous that your kid swallows could do as much damage coming back up as it did going down. Your best bet? Call your local poison control centre or 911. Keep ipecac out of your home; if you have an old bottle in the cupboard, take it to your pharmacy for safe disposal.