Individual First Aid Kit - Trauma

Checklist covering the initial threats to life based around the MARCH/ABCDE acronyms.

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Introduction

This Individual First Aid Kit checklist is designed around trauma-based priorities and the immediate threats to life. This is based around a basic level of civilian training. Additional items may be added if you are properly trained. The focus is on equipment that supports the ABCs and early trauma care, including severe bleeding control, airway management, breathing support, shock prevention, and basic patient documentation. This kit is intended to help a trained responder take quick, organized action during the first critical minutes of an emergency until advanced medical care arrives.

Trauma care is commonly organized using structured assessment models such as **MARCH** and **ABCDE**. These acronyms help responders quickly identify and treat the most immediate threats to life in a logical order.

MARCH is often used in trauma situations where severe bleeding may be present. It stands for **Massive Hemorrhage, Airway, Respiration, Circulation, and Hypothermia/Head Injury**. The sequence starts with controlling life-threatening bleeding first, since severe blood loss can become fatal within minutes. After major bleeding is addressed, the responder checks the airway, evaluates breathing and chest injuries, assesses circulation and signs of shock, and works to prevent hypothermia while monitoring for head injury.

ABCDE is a broader patient assessment approach used in emergency care. It stands for **Airway, Breathing, Circulation, Disability, and Exposure/Environment**. This method helps responders evaluate whether the patient has an open airway, is breathing effectively, has adequate circulation, shows signs of neurological impairment, and has any hidden injuries that need to be exposed and assessed while also protecting the patient from heat loss.

Both systems are designed to keep care organized during stressful situations. **MARCH is especially useful for trauma and severe bleeding scenarios**, while **ABCDE is useful for a full initial patient assessment**. Together, they help guide responders through the most critical problems first instead of getting distracted by less urgent injuries.

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1. Massive Hemorrhage/Bleeding Control

This is the priority. Severe bleeding is one of the leading preventable causes of death after injury, which is why Stop the Bleed focuses heavily on early bleeding control.

- ☐ 2 - Tourniquet – Windlass Style – CAT-7 or SOF-T – Stop Extremity (Arm or Leg) Bleed
- ☐ 2 – Hemostatic Gauze – Quickclot – Wound Packing in Junctional Areas
- ☐ 2 Compressed Gauze – Z-Fold – Wound Packing & Direct Pressure
- ☐ 1-2 Emergency Pressure Bandage – Israeli or H-Bandage – Holds Pressure Hands Free
- ☐ 1 – ACE Wrap w/ Velcro – Secures Gauze & Improvised Emergency Pressure Bandage
- ☐ 1 – Sharpie – To record Tourniquet Application Time and Other Notes
- ☐ 2 – Pairs of Nitrile Gloves – Body Substance Isolation

2. Airway

The goal here is simple: keep air moving.

- ☐ 1 – Nasopharyngeal Airway (NPA) – Sized to You – If Properly Trained
- ☐ 1 – Packet of Water-based Lubricant to place NPA
- ☐ 1 – CPR Face Shield or Pocket Mask – Breathing Barrier during CPR
- ☐ 1 – Trauma Shears – Expose injuries, chest, and airway for assessment

3. Breathing/Chest Injuries

For penetrating chest trauma, the major concern is an open chest wound and possible tension pneumothorax. TCCC guidance supports using a **vented chest seal** for open/sucking chest wounds, with monitoring afterward.

- ☐ 2 – Vented Chest Seals – Seal entry and exit wounds to chest, back or torso
- ☐ 2 – Occlusive Dressing – Backup for Chest Seals – Tagaderm Film Dressing
- ☐ 1 – Roll Medical Tape – Secure dressing or aid in improvised chest seal

4. Circulation / Shock Management

Once Massive Hemorrhages are stopped, airway is secure, and any injuries effecting breathing have been delt with, prevent the patient from crashing from blood loss, cold or exposure.

- ☐ 1-2 – Emergency Mylar Blankets – Prevents Heat Loss and Shock Worsening
- ☐ 4 – 4x4 Sterile Gauze – Stop or Cover minor Veinous/Capillary Bleeds
- ☐ 1-2 – Triangular Bandage – Sling, splint tie, pressure dressing support

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5. Basic Trauma Support Items

- ☐ 1 – Trauma Shears – Expose Injuries Quickly & Cut Bandages as Needed
- ☐ 1 – Pen Light/Head Lamp – Hands free illumination/pupillary response checks
- ☐ Handful – Alcohol Wipes – Sterilize tools/minor wounds AFTER massive hemorrhage control
- ☐ 1 – MARCH/ABC Cheat Sheet Card

CORE IFAK

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- ☐ 2 – TQs
- ☐ 1 – Hemostatic Gauze
- ☐ 1 – Compressed Gauze
- ☐ 1 – Emergency Pressure Bandage
- ☐ 1 – NPA w/ Lube
- ☐ 1 – CPR Face Shield
- ☐ 2 – Vented Chest Seals
- ☐ 1 – Emergency Mylar Blanket
- ☐ 2 – Pairs Nitrile Gloves
- ☐ 1 – Trauma Shears
- ☐ 1- Roll Medical/Athletic Tape
- ☐ MARCH/ABC Cheat Sheet Card

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MARCH/ABC Cheat Sheet

1. Scene Safety
2. Call 911/Activate EMS
3. Massive Bleeding
    - Direct Pressure
    - TQ Limbs
    - Pack Wounds
4. Airway
    - Open Airway
    - Recovery Position if Breathing & Unconscious
    - NPA if Trained
5. Breathing
    - Expose Chest
    - Seal Penetrating Chest/Back Wounds
    - Monitor Breathing
        i. Initiate CPR if no Pulse or Breathing
6. Circulation/Shock
    - Recheck Bleeding and Treatments
    - Keep Patient Warm & On-Back

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