



First Aid

As a Girl Scout, you have opportunities to experience amazing outdoor adventures. Accidents are rare—but when you’re exploring outside, anything can happen. If an emergency arises, others may look to you as an Ambassador for guidance on what to do. While earning this badge, you’ll learn skills that define the Girl Scout motto: “Be Prepared.” You’ll be ready to handle many outdoor situations, from treating a mosquito bite to saving a life.

Steps

1. Build your knowledge before heading into the wilderness
2. Learn about careers that save lives in extreme conditions
3. Provide first aid in remote locations
4. Know how to get help in remote locations
5. Explore real-life examples for handling wilderness emergencies

Purpose

When I’ve earned this badge, I’ll know more about how to provide first aid in extreme conditions.



Tip Before Takeoff

When you've earned this badge, you'll know more about how to handle wilderness health emergencies. But you can actually hurt the people you're trying to help if you don't have top-notch first aid skills. For that reason, it is strongly recommended that you take a First Aid/CPR/AED course as part of this badge (in Step 1 or 3) if you don't already have that certification or if a previous certification has expired.

Step 1: Build your knowledge before heading into the wilderness

Adventure trips test your limits, build new skills, and increase your confidence—all while you enjoy the fun of being outdoors. They also create the rare possibility of serious medical emergencies. Before heading into the wilderness, build your knowledge about the worst-case scenarios you could encounter and how to handle them.

Choices—do one:

Take a First Aid/CPR/AED course. Basic first aid skills are essential in the wilderness, where professional help will probably take much longer to arrive in emergencies.

Learn about health emergencies specific to certain wilderness areas. Interview a lifeguard or Coast Guard medic, a wilderness first responder, a local park ranger, or another outdoor first aid specialist about emergencies you might encounter on open water, in the backcountry, in the mountains, or in another area that interests you. Find out how to handle these emergencies if they occur.

Host a movie night or book club. Find a great movie or book about an outdoor adventure. Watch the movie or read the book, then discuss it with friends or family and talk about what you learned. How did the characters in the story prepare for their trip? What types of conditions did they encounter? Did they have to cope with any emergencies? How would you handle your own outdoor adventure?



AED

stands for **automated external defibrillator**. An AED is a machine that analyzes someone's heartbeat. It can give the heart an electric shock to restart it, if needed.



CPR

stands for **cardiopulmonary resuscitation**. It's an emergency procedure performed on someone whose heart has stopped beating.

CHECK-CALL-CARE

In a wilderness emergency, don't forget to:



CHECK

your surroundings for safety, and **CHECK** the hurt person to assess their condition.



CALL

for help, if needed and possible. Get a first aid kit and AED, if you have them, or send someone to get them.



CARE

for the person by providing first aid or other assistance.

High-Altitude Sickness



As altitude increases, oxygen levels fall. At heights above 8,000 feet—or even at lower altitudes during strenuous activities such as hiking, biking, and climbing—

low oxygen levels can lead to a condition called high-altitude sickness. Early symptoms include headaches, breathlessness, fatigue, nausea, swelling of the extremities, and a rapid pulse. More serious symptoms include confusion, loss of consciousness and coordination, and extreme shortness of breath. In the worst cases, the condition can be fatal.

Before heading out on any mountain trip, educate yourself about high-altitude sickness. Learn how to prevent it and how to recognize its symptoms if it does occur, as well as what to do about it. A little knowledge can go a long way toward keeping you safe in high places.

Step 2: Learn about careers that save lives in extreme conditions

Some people go to work each day ready to save lives in extraordinarily tough situations. Find out more about these careers by conducting an interview. Ask about the training and education needed and situations where the person has used their expertise.

Choices—do one:

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Learn about wilderness rescue. Interview a rescue pilot, park ranger, or member of a wilderness search-and-rescue squad or ski patrol.
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Learn about disaster preparedness. Interview a firefighter, EMT, or member of a local emergency response unit who is trained to handle major disasters such as hurricanes, floods, or earthquakes.
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Learn about military medicine. Interview a combat medic or member of a military medical unit to find out how they care for soldiers during training exercises or combat.

Careers to Explore

- First response or wilderness EMT
- Girl Scout outdoors specialist
- Veterinarian
- Physician's assistant
- Home health aide
- Special education teacher
- Veterinary technician
- Hearing therapist
- Combat medic
- Dental hygienist
- Epidemiologist
- Nurse
- Ultrasound technician
- Midwife
- Laboratory technician
- Acupuncturist
- Pharmacy technician
- Park ranger



Step 3: Provide first aid in remote locations

In a remote location or extreme situation that makes it hard for help to reach you, it's important to know how to keep a critically injured person alive until professionals can take over. Find out what to do during the time it takes for help to arrive.

Choices—do one:

Take a wilderness first aid course. Find a course taught by a certified instructor or endorsed by an accredited organization.

Make a plan for wilderness

emergencies. Do research to come up with a list of things you need to know before any wilderness trip (distance, duration, level of risk, and more) and talk about what special first aid items you might need for different conditions you would expect to encounter. Make a checklist that you can fill out before any outdoor adventure.



Discover how to use what's available in an

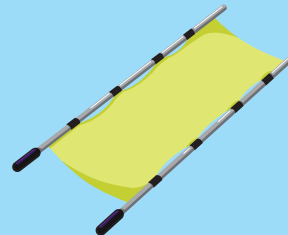
emergency. With the help of a doctor, nurse, or EMT who specializes in disaster or survival medicine, find out how common items found in your camping gear or nature might help keep a critically injured person alive when emergency help is delayed.

To Move, or Not to Move?

One basic rule of first aid is not to move someone with a serious injury. But sometimes there's no choice, particularly when a medical emergency occurs in a remote location. When would a hurt person need to be moved?



- When they're in immediate danger from conditions such as uncertain or uneven ground, fire, flooding, dangerous animals, or falling trees.
- To reach another person who needs aid. A person with minor injuries might need to be moved in order to help a severely injured person.
- When it's necessary for proper care. For example, if someone needs CPR, they must be moved to a flat surface.



These decisions should only be made by a highly qualified adult. NEVER move an injured person without the proper training.



Step 4: Know how to get help in remote locations

As you get farther from civilization, it becomes harder and harder to summon emergency aid—and you can't count on having cell service in the wilderness. If a medical emergency occurs, you might need other ways of summoning help. The choices in this step will teach you some handy ways to get the assistance you need.

Choices—do one:

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Assemble an emergency signaling kit. Do research to learn about items that can help you to get attention in remote areas, such as whistles, flares, and flashlights or headlamps. Assemble an emergency signaling kit to keep with you whenever you venture into the wilderness.

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Learn to use distress signals. Distress signals are visible or audible messages that are commonly understood to signal the need for help. Two that you should know are the alpine distress signal (for use in alpine areas) and Morse code for the letters SOS (for use everywhere else). Learn these signals, then practice them with a light or a whistle.

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Find out how to use a cell phone without service. If you have access to a cell phone that works in the wilderness and you need emergency help, just call 911—no problem. But if the phone doesn't have service, all hope is not lost. Many cell phones have built-in hacks that can connect you to the outside world, even without a signal. Research a phone's life-saving tricks and make a list of instructions to keep in your on-the-go gear.



Not all wounds are visible. Check out the Girl Scouts Mental Wellness patch program and learn to take care of your mind as well as your body.



Flight Paramedics

A flight paramedic, or flight medic, is a paramedic trained to work on patients in flight. They usually travel in helicopters with other medical personnel, such as doctors and nurses. (Most large hospitals have helicopters and places for them to land safely.) A flight paramedic works to keep a patient stable while they're flown to a hospital. These paramedics must be able to stay calm and focused in a hectic environment, and they usually have at least five years' experience working as a paramedic on the ground.





Wilderness Challenge

You're well on your way to being prepared for many of the challenges the wilderness can throw at you. So why not put your skills to the test with a friend or two—and find out if you have what it takes to survive a real wilderness challenge?

With a parent or caregiver's permission, supervision, and participation, come up with a scenario that would really test your limits and find a group of two to six people to take it on with you. Imagine a raging blizzard moving in while you're hiking, your car breaking down on a lonely stretch of road in the desert, or another test. Then, come up with a way to role-play this scenario in the wild. Plan to spend a full 24-hour day—maybe even two—using your wilderness and first aid skills to survive your imaginary challenge. Work on your challenge idea with an experienced Girl Scout adult who can help you decide on details, create a backup emergency plan, and accompany your group. Be sure to leave the full details of your intended route and timing with your parent or caregiver before embarking on your adventure.

During your challenge, have each participant write a few sentences in a journal every hour. Keep track of your moods and those of the group as a whole. You may be surprised by how quickly people fall into certain roles—one group member may act as the leader, while another may work at keeping people cheerful and motivated. Capture your thoughts about how well your group works together.

Once you're safely back home, reflect on your challenge. What did you learn about things you should always carry? Is there anything you'd like to have on hand in an emergency that you don't normally have with you? What things would you do without?

Think About

- Supplies: What do you normally have available in your backpack, handbag, or car? If you're suddenly stranded you'll be limited, adding to the challenge, so make your supply list as realistic as possible.
- How you'll find water if you need it.
- What you'll need to keep yourself warm or cool (depending on the weather).
- How to make sure everyone in the group is feeling okay—what will you do if someone starts showing signs of dehydration, hypothermia, hyperthermia, or high-altitude sickness? What will you do in case of animal bites? How would these types of situations influence the decision-making capacity of the affected group member?
- Individual needs: Consider the needs of all participants in your planning.



Step 5: Explore real-life examples for handling wilderness emergencies

When you read about a tragedy or accident in which people are injured, you often hear about an average person who didn't panic and used a little bit of training and a lot of courage to save someone's life. Find out more about these everyday heroes.

Choices—do one:

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Explore real-life wilderness survival. Read a book or an article or see a movie that tells a real-life story about a person or people who were heroes in the face of wilderness emergencies. Find out what factors led to the situation and how they handled it. Discuss what you learned from the story with your troop.
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Investigate wilderness first aid. Find at least five news stories about everyday people who saved someone's life using first aid during an extreme situation. Share them with friends and family and discuss common threads in the stories. Did the heroes have training? What do they credit with helping them save someone else's life?
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Organize a mock wilderness emergency drill. Get help from emergency responders such as firefighters or EMTs. Assign some people to have various injuries that might occur in the wilderness, and have others help them. Switch roles so that everyone has a chance to “treat” the injured people, then ask the emergency responders to give you feedback.



Animal Bites



Although insect bites are a common wilderness hazard, bites by larger animals, such as snakes, raccoons, or bears, are rare. A wild animal's bite can cause life-threatening infections, such as rabies or tetanus.

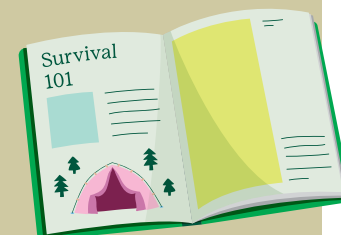
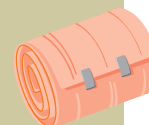
If a minor skin-breaking bite occurs, clean the area well. Control any bleeding, then apply antibiotic ointment and cover the wound with an adhesive or gauze bandage. Seek medical attention immediately upon returning to civilization.



Do not attempt to clean a serious wound. It should be cleaned at a medical facility. Do control severe bleeding, especially if it's life-threatening.



Remember, prevention is the key to avoiding most animal bites. Never approach or handle unfamiliar animals. Keep food in scent-tight containers to avoid attracting animal attention. Most importantly, know your area. Do research in advance to learn what animals you may encounter on a trip—and what you should do if they approach.





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