

Enjoy this peek inside the “alternative” section of my first aid kit.

DISCLAIMER:

These suggestions are not meant as medical advice. I have found these products to be useful on the trail because they are lightweight and have worked for me. I am not endorsing them and I do not receive compensation from these companies. I am not telling you to use them to diagnose or treat any medical conditions – your health is your own responsibility. Please use this list in the spirit in which it was intended: one hiker passing along useful information to another. Happy hiking!

1. Swollen or irritated skin: Neem oil bailed me out of a fat lip due to a wasp sting once, and has been in my pack ever since. Many companies offer this – do a quick Internet search.
2. Blistered or burned skin: Ah! Aloe vera gel is your relief. You can *grow the plant* at home and snip off a piece, wrap it in plastic, and throw it into your first aid gear each time you hike. Note: It won't last long, so be sure you remove it, or an unpleasant surprise will come your way next time you open your first aid kit.

Or you can *buy some aloe gel* in a plastic container.

Either way, it feels soothing when you squeeze it onto unhappy skin (bug bits, stinging nettles, minor scrapes or burns).

3. Dry/itchy eyes: Try Optique 1, a brand of homeopathic eye drops available in sterile single doses from Boiron. When trail dust is unavoidable, I've used these drops to wash out grit and help me see clearly. This product was also useful to remove a bug impact which left my eye irritated and weepy. Sing along with me: “I'm gonna wash that bug right outa my eye.”
4. Sore, achy muscles on the second day of a backpacking trip: You know the feeling, right? You wake up stiff and sore after yesterday's 12 (or 2, depending) miles. How will you put that pack on today? This combination of homeopathic anti-inflammatories, called Traumeel from Heel Inc., could be the answer. It's available in tablet, drop, gel, or ointment applications. I've used all of them, and been satisfied.
5. Bug bites: Here's another homeopathic remedy, called Bitecare gel from Boiron. [You'd think I own stock in the company, but sadly, no.] After a good dose of mosquitoes or biting flies, I use a dose of Bitecare. No odor, no stinging (been there, done that!).