

# Heading out? Pack your meds



**Tips**  
**from the Posse**

*By Mark Rackay*

In your pack there are a few medications you should always have with you. Depending on the duration and location of your trip, some prescription drugs may be in order as well.

Before we get into this subject, I wish to point out that I am not a doctor, nor do I play one in print. This is not medical advice, rather, it is something for you to consider, and I encourage you to seek the advice of your own physician.

Murphy, of Murphy’s Law fame, does not really care how far you might be from medical assistance when he decides to pay you a visit. If you are heading to the wilds of Canada, or the Colorado high country accessible only by helicopter in an emergency, you might start off the trip with a visit to your family doctor. It is a good idea to make sure you are in working order beforehand.

Should you come down with an illness, some antibiotics would be in order. I carry amoxicillin and azithromycin as a general rule. Discuss with your doctor where you are going and see what he suggests for your specific needs.

In some places, the water you drink can be a problem. Bad water can infect you with bacteria with names I cannot pronounce. Purification of the water before you ingest it, is the key.

However, sometimes fruit, ice and improper hand washing can lead to a dose of bacteria.

If the water quality is a concern, your doctor may prescribe metronidazole for giardia. There are other useful antibiotics such as cephalexin, which is used for respiratory, ear, skin and urinary tract infections.

When it comes to antibiotics, listen to your doctor. He will instruct you on how and when to take them. You don’t want to take them incorrectly, as that could only make the situation worse. Some training is in order if you are going to carry prescription drugs.

Just as important are a handful of over the counter medications that can save a trip, or at least make it tolerable. These are available to all but again, care should be exercised with their usage, as improper dosage or use can complicate a problem.

Here is a list to get you started. Most of these are very inexpensive, especially if you purchase the generic equivalent.

- **Ibuprofen (Advil)**  
This is the most versatile of the anti-inflammatory



While it may look like the inside of a neglected medicine cabinet’s contents, this pile of drugs, has a useful place in the outdoor world. (Special to the Montrose Daily press/Mark Rackay)

drugs and is used for pain and inflammation. Use it for headaches, sore throat, fever, muscle aches and strains. It is also a good fever reducer.

- **Acetaminophen (Tylenol)**  
This is a pain reliever that is not an anti-inflammatory. It is used for the same symptoms as ibuprofen but may not be as effective on certain people. It is best for folks with sensitive stomachs.
- **Diphenhydramine (Benadryl)**  
This is an antihistamine. I like it to help relieve itching from hives and rashes, like poison ivy. It is also useful for someone who gets stung by insects.
- **Lopermide (Imodium)**  
This is a very effective drug for diarrhea. Nothing ruins a backcountry trip faster than a bout of the trots, and this drug will help address the issue. It can also be used to treat intestinal cramps.

- **Ranitidine (Zantac)**  
This is simply something to relieve heartburn in case Murphy does the cooking. I get heartburn more and more the older I get, mostly from my own cooking.
- **Cough medicine**  
A cough can be annoying at the very least, especially on your tent mates. It can also ruin a hunting trip when you are trying to be quiet and all you do is hack.

All of these medications are probably in your medicine chest at home. You don’t have to carry a large bottle of all these items.

I carry the ibuprofen and acetaminophen, around 20 of each, in a small pill container. The whole kit for these drugs will fit in a quart-sized storage bag and weighs less than a pound, but worth its weight in gold if needed.

Whenever you carry prescription drugs, it must be in the original pharmacy bottle with the original prescription attached. This can create quite a storage and packing problem, especially when weight and room is critical.

Discuss with your doctor just what prescriptions you may need for your planned trip. He will take into consideration where you are going, how long you will be there, and how far it is to the nearest medical help in an emergency.

Before you take a trip, especially if you leave the States, make sure all your vaccinations are up to date. One of the most important shots an outdoor person should stay up with is the Td booster for tetanus-diphtheria, which is due every 10 years.

Bacteria known as clostridium tetani cause tetanus, which is also called lockjaw. The bacteria affect the function of the nerves, leading to muscle spasms in the neck, abdomen and extremities. Tetanus has been called “lockjaw” because the muscle spasms in the face and neck can lead to the inability to open the mouth.

The bacteria that cause tetanus are found in soil, manure or dust. The bacteria enter the body through cuts or puncture wounds, and sometime through animal bites. All of this is easily prevented with a booster shot.

Carry a kit of necessary medicines on all your trips to the backcountry, just in case Murph wants to make you sick. You may be glad you did.

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