Your Wound Care Section Needs More Than Just Band-Aids

Next to the premium supplement section, first aid products with wound care is the most important OTC category you can offer. Like vitamins, the size of the category will depend upon your understanding, passion, and comfort level in making recommendations.

First aid can be divided into two types of sales: self-serve and advice-driven. First aid rarely generates impulse sales. If you are knowledgeable in wound care, have the time, and are comfortable in answering questions that consumers may have in purchasing first aid and wound care items, then your store can profit from a 20-foot or larger section of first aid products. If a store is looking to sell just traditional bandages, creams, and ointments, then eight feet will suffice. **Being able to assist the customer in making the right choices in this department will provide you an important advantage over the chains.** Companion categories include foot care, braces, and hot & cold bruise treatments. First aid/wound care is one of the least price sensitive categories in a pharmacy and can offer a profit margin of over 40 percent, much like your vitamin section.

Determining inventory for your first aid section should be gauged by peak and valley sales demands. For example, bandages, itch relief, antibiotics, antiseptics, skin protection, and first aid kits will see a spike in sales in early spring and into the late summer months. Boost your inventory of these items in late winter. Lice treatments will see a spike in the cooler months and especially after the summer school break. Expect another surge shortly after the winter holiday break. There has been measurable growth in natural and organic lice treatments; check with your wholesaler or attend a natural product show to purchase these lines. Lice treatments for body, clothes, and bedding should be well-stocked by Aug. 1 in time for the new school year.

Wound supply that goes beyond traditional first aid tapes, gauze dressings, and surgical bandages is a niche category that every store owner should explore. The first step in planning this section is to talk to local doctors in your community, ask what they are recommending for wound care, and make every effort to carry the product(s). Become a partner in filling local physicians' recommendations and you can attract new patients.

NOTE: From personal experience, I can tell you that a first aid section that offers ONLY private label is not a good idea. I once merchandised a smaller size store with just private label and customers quickly complained. I will never underestimate the value of major brands again. If you have confidence in your private label and you are making at least a 45 percent profit margin, then, and only then, should you promote your first aid store brand.

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