

### Garage First Aid

The following are first aid issues that I have personally experienced; I am not recommending anything, I am just relating stories of garage incidents that I have survived. First aid is for just that, “first”.

**Eyes:** Wearing eye protection is mandatory for almost any work around cars; the most common events are falling rust or dirt and flying pieces (both large and small). I have never forgotten a long ago trip to the doctor for metal shavings in my eye. The metal was quickly removed with a large magnet and 24 hours later I was fine. Scary! Since that event, I use glasses, I have a strong magnet, and I keep a bottle of eye wash above my work bench. I have used that eye wash so many times that it is a priceless addition to my tools. The bottle comes with a cup to help with flushing.

**Burns:** My burn first aid consists of **immediate** application of cold in any form. **Seconds count**, so I use ice in a rag, ice water, cold beverage can – anything with some mass to immediately lower the temperature. As soon as I can, I pack the area with crushed ice in a rag. I avoid direct long term ice or too much time in ice water but the quicker the cold is applied the less tissue damage occurs. Small burns seem to need only a half hour, larger areas or more serious burns need more time. The next step is to soak the area in egg white. I have been creative with saturated dressings in order to continue work on a car. If I keep the egg white applied for at least a 24 hour period I see a miraculous healing process.

**Injured Finger Tips:** As with burns, **immediate** application of cold will not only ease pain but will slow the blood loss under the nail. Again, **seconds count**. Since the injury is deeper than a burn, I use crushed ice or repeated dips in ice water over an hour or more. If the blood is building up under the nail even with cold application then expect continuing pain and a black nail for months unless another step is taken: I have carefully drilled a 1/64<sup>th</sup> hole through the nail at the center of the blood build up; this lets the blood out, reducing pressure and pain and will come very close to eliminating the discoloring after only a week or two. This may sound like something you cannot do but I have done this repeatedly over the years with 100% success. The pressure of the blood buildup has created a cushion under the nail and careful drilling will not cause any trauma. The pain reduction is immediate.

**Arthritis/Tendonitis:** Over a period of several months I experienced increasing pain in my hands and fingers; working on almost anything became a challenge to find ways to work around aches and burning. I had minor pain constantly and severe pain trying to twist tools or grip tightly. I did some quick research and decided I was developing arthritis in my middle fingers of both hands. I focused on ignoring the pain until my wife recounted an incident from 20 years ago. She had a wrist pain that would not go away – her personal doctor visit suggested a hairline crack from playing tennis so she lived with it until our own Dr. Koch checked her at a Corvair Club meeting. His diagnosis was tendonitis which turned out to be accurate and within days she was pain free.

I was not experiencing swollen joints, just pain, so at my wife's suggestion I took 400 mg of Ibuprofen three times a day and a week later the pain was all but gone. After 2 weeks I dropped the dosage to 200 mg three times a day and will probably stop after another week. Sandy's problem has never reoccurred and I am hoping for the same results. Yes, I know how old I am!

**Scrapes and Small Cuts:** My favorite is a quick soap and water wash, a clean dressing, and a small amount of “Miracle Hand Repair” purchased at Bed Bath and Beyond. After work, I leave the area without a bandage but with the cream applied regularly until it heals. I have tried other first aid creams over the years and this has worked the best for me; it does not turn the skin white and speeds healing (60% Aloe Gel). Egg white is another good alternative but requires more attention. Obviously bigger cuts require pressure and dressings, if not stitches.

If you have other favorite first aid for “garage trauma”, please share.

**Post Script:** After reviewing my article, Dr. Koch offered the following additional tips:

- Metal in your eye can rust quickly and cause permanent cornea damage. If it still feels as if you have something in your eye an hour after flushing you should seek emergent care.
- A squeeze bottle of normal saline found in the contact lens section of the drug store is also good for flushing out objects or liquids from the eye.
- In lieu of a drill you can heat the end of a paper clip to red and use it to melt a hole in a nail to let the blood out.