

HOME & FAMILY

SHOPPING AROUND | First-Aid Kits

Targeting Hikers, Families

That staple of most homes—the first-aid kit—is getting a makeover. Manufacturers are adding technology and items for specific situations, such as hiking injuries or flu outbreaks. We found that the latest kits come with some handy additions—but in some cases, are pricey for basic items that consumers could buy themselves.

A basic first-aid kit should include bandages, gauze pads, adhesive, a thermometer, acetaminophen, ibuprofen and possibly antibiotic and anti-itch cream, says Rick Kellerman, president of the American Academy of Family Physicians.

We sized up the latest offerings:

■ **Product:** MediBag

Price: \$19.95

Company: me4kidz LLC, www.me4kidz.com

Comments: This kit is designed for families with kids. It carries mostly basics like bandages and antiseptic wipes. But the red box also contains stickers, wipes to relieve insect stings, and bandages in the shape of crayons.

■ **Product:** Outdoor First Aid Kit

Price: Starts at \$19.99

Company: Total Resources International Corp.; available at www.OSKits.com and other sporting-good stores.

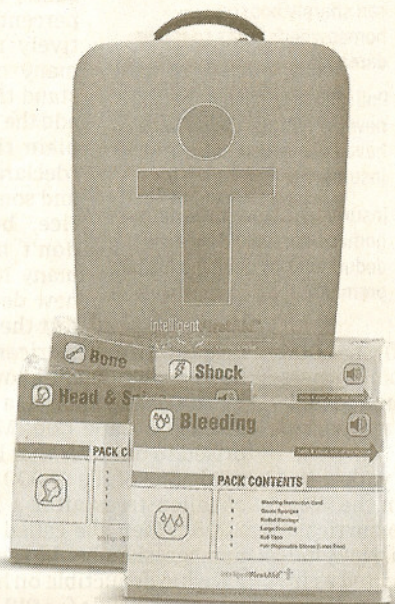
Comments: The kit comes in a compact, durable carrying case and includes items handy for camping and hiking, such as a whistle, electrolytes for dehydration and burn-relief cream. The clear plastic makes locating things easy, but it's a bit heavy to lug on a camping trip.

■ **Product:** Talking First Aid Kit (at right)

Price: \$129.99

Company/Availability: DLH Inc. www.intelligentfirstaid.com; available in September (but orders taken now).

Comments: This kit divides first-aid items into separate compartments with individual “talking” instruction cards for treatment of different maladies, such as burns or bites. The cards have helpful visual aids, such as pictures of insects to identify the type of sting. One drawback: the bulky case.



Patrick Conroy/WJSJ

■ **Product:** Family Solution Kit

Price: \$209.75 for a one-person kit, \$638.00 for a four-person kit

Company: Pandemic 101 Corp., www.pandemic101.com

Comments: This kit is designed to protect families from outbreaks of diseases like avian flu. It contains a voucher for a free prescription of Tamiflu, a flu medicine, which the buyer brings to a doctor for a prescription. Dr. Kellerman says people could get the prescription without the voucher, and that some physicians may be unwilling to fill a prescription if not absolutely necessary.

—Sara Schaefer Muñoz

The 411 on Mobile

We Test Services That Search Business Listings

By SAMAR SRIVASTAVA

When you're out and about and suddenly find yourself in need of a pizza, a shoe-repair shop or an airline reservation, the Yellow Pages just won't do. They are heavy, for one thing, and don't fit easily into a shoulder bag.

But finding a business on the fly is becoming much easier as a host of free phone-directory services have begun offering custom searches of their business listings.

Tellme Networks, a Microsoft Corp. subsidiary, this spring began offering a free version of its search services that gives cellphone and landline callers access to business listings and services far outside the traditional 411 realm, such as stock quotes and travel-related information. Google Inc. recently launched a test version for phone users of its online local business-search service.

The two new services join San Diego-based startup Jingle Networks Inc., which has been offering free government, residential and business listings since September 2005. Tellme and Google, by contrast, don't even offer residential listings.

To check whether the free services are as good as their paid counterparts—and whether the hassle of listening to an advertisement is worth the free listing—we tested them against the paid offerings



from T-Mobile, a subsidiary of Deutsche Telekom AG, and Verizon Wireless, which is jointly owned by Verizon Communications Inc. and Vodafone Group PLC. We searched for business listings and tested other options when available. As a baseline test, we searched for local pizza-restaurant listings across all five services.

For the most part, the free services have ditched live operators and are powered by speech-recognition software. This reduces the cost of providing the service to between eight and 10 cents per inquiry from about 25 cents. But we found that most speech-recognition systems can only understand words and phrases. Speaking a full sentence made the search go off course.

The tradeoff: Jingle requires its users to listen to a short advertisement before the listing is provided, and Tellme and Google are widely expected to follow suit.

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SERVICE	EASE OF USE	PRO	CON
Microsoft Tellme (1-800-555-TELL)	Easy to navigate, but menus take some getting used to for first-time users.	By far the most extensive free 411 service.	Not all the options work as promised. We were unable to get driving directions, for example.
Jingle Networks FREE 411 (1-800-FREE-411)	With just three options to choose from, the search options were easy to understand.	Live operators are on standby.	Advertisements before and after search.
Google Voice Local Search (1-800-GOOG-411)	Just say your location and the type of business you're looking for.	Gives you eight options.	We were unable to give our exact location.
T-Mobile (411 from T-Mobile cellphones)	Our call was answered promptly.	You can get additional listings on request for each search.	Costs \$1.49 for three searches.
Verizon Wireless (411 from Verizon cellphones)	We had to wait for close to a minute before the operator picked up.	Offers Yellow Pages listings by name or business type.	Costs \$1.49 for three searches.