



**SUPPLY
LINE**

Field Dressing

Military service was often dangerous. People could be wounded by enemy weapons or in accidents. First aid was an essential part of military training. Field dressings were large bandages used in treating wounds. This one is a reproduction of an army field dressing. The navy and air force used similar versions.

Reproduction



Field Dressing © Canadian War Museum

Essential First Aid

Easy to carry and use, field dressings were part of every soldier's standard equipment. They could be used to treat wounds from bullets, exploding shells and other causes.

The dressing covered the wound and helped control bleeding. It was an essential part of first aid during the Second World War.

How It's Used

The outer cloth package, which included printed instructions, helped protect the dressing and keep it sterile. The dressing itself was made of an absorbent pad attached to a long bandage. The example in the Discovery Box is a modern reproduction. **Please do not open it.**

The dressing pad was applied to the wound. The ends of the bandage were wrapped around the pad, then passed around the leg, arm, body

or head, depending where the wound was. The ends of the bandage were then fastened with a large safety pin included in the package.

Pressure from the dressing kept the pad in place and helped stop bleeding. The pad absorbed blood and helped protect the wound from dirt and infection. Earlier versions of the field dressing had a separate waterproof layer that had to be applied over the pad.

Who Used It?

The field dressing was meant to be carried in the pocket of a soldier's trousers, but Canadian soldiers often carried them on their helmets. The camouflage netting stretched over the helmet held the dressing in place – keeping it out of the way, but easy to reach when needed.

Stretcher bearers, who were trained to treat and evacuate wounded personnel, carried first aid equipment that included shell dressings. These were bigger versions of the field dressing,

and were used on larger wounds. Stretcher bearers would help get the wounded to better-equipped medical facilities, farther away from the fighting.

Because field dressings were simple and easy to make, they were manufactured in many countries, including Canada. The Royal Canadian Navy and Royal Canadian Air Force also used field dressings.

Did You Know?

The person providing first aid was supposed to use the wounded person's own field dressing. That way, the uninjured soldier would still have a field dressing available if they were wounded later. This is also why soldiers kept their field dressings in standard locations, to make them easier for others to find in an emergency.