



Lighten The Educational Load!

School is in session!

Is your child wearing a backpack that is too heavy? Is he/she wearing it the wrong way? If so, it can lead to pain and strain in the back. Don't take this lightly. Back pain in children is predictive of adult back pain. Don't let studying be a pain in the neck or back (literally) for your child.

Every day, children can lug up to 10-15 lbs to and from school in their backpacks. As the new school year begins, we urge parents to keep backpack safety on the top of their lists. In a news release from MCGHealth Children's Medical Center in Augusta, Georgia, about 6,000 children per year in United States will experience backpack-related injuries.

Why does this concern us? There's a correlation between the loads our children carry and symptoms of an unhealthy spine - including low back pain, shoulder pain, and neck pain.

The Harsh Truth About Backpacks:

Heavy backpacks have a destructive impact on the posture and spinal health. Carrying too much weight contributes to poor disc alignment and disc compression. In addition, muscle fatigue and shoulder or back strain set in. About 55% of children wear their backpacks incorrectly.

Heavy loads cause injuries that last a lifetime. Injuries to shoulders, neck and back may cause recurring pain and ailments later in the life for your child.

The American Academy of Orthopedics stated that backpack injury is a significant problem for children. There is a significant amount of individuals complaining about back or shoulder pain related to backpacks. Many doctors recommend that a patient modify the use of a backpack to improve or correct a back problem.



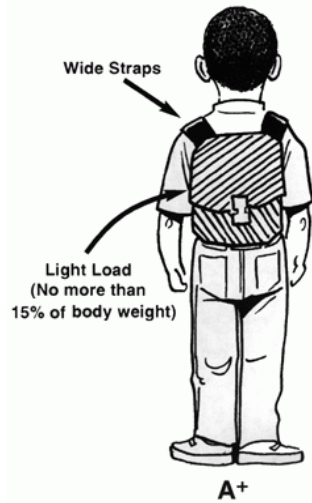
Backpack Safety Advice



In an effort to cut down on the incidence of spinal injuries, here are tips from our qualified therapists to keep your child injury-free:

- Choose a lightweight backpack that doesn't add too much to your child's load.
- The pack should have two wide, padded shoulder straps and a padded back that will improve comfort and protect your child from too much stress on the spine. Select the proper sized backpack for your child.
- It should cover no more than three-quarters of the length of your child's back.
- Load backpacks properly. The maximum weight of a loaded pack should never exceed 10-15% of a child's body weight. This means if your child weighs 100 lbs, the backpack should weigh no more than 10-15 lbs.
- Place the heaviest books closest to the back as they require the most body support. If your child has to lean forward to carry it, it's too heavy. Have your child wear the pack correctly. He or she should use both shoulder straps.
- Carrying a backpack on one shoulder puts too much strain on one side of the upper body. If a backpack has a waist strap, use it to help better support the load.
- Make sure the backpack is not carried for too long –take breaks and put the bag down when standing for a while.

Choose The Right Backpack



When choosing the right backpack for your child, look for one that:

- Fits the body comfortably
- Doesn't extend above the shoulders when seated
- Has shoulder straps that are broad, well padded and adjustable
- Has straps attached to the top of the pack at separate points
- Has a waist strap to keep the load in place when moving
- Has separate compartments to allow heavy items to be packed close to the body
- Is padded where it touches the back, and made of firm material to prevent the load from sagging backwards

In addition to these precautions, it's best to get your child evaluated for risk of low back pain and spinal injuries. **Schedule a check-up for your child with our skilled physical therapists - we can determine whether your child's spine is healthy and suggest actions such as flexibility and muscle control to help maximize the health of their spine.**

Remember, the health of your child is in your hands. We are here to help keep you and your family healthy. Call us today to schedule an appointment.

Tip to consider:

Work with your child each night to review necessary books and supplies and identify ways to reduce weight each day. Kids tend to accumulate extra "stuff" very quickly. Doing this before bedtime, reduces the morning rush the next day