

Backpack Safety



Backpack Facts

- More than 40 million students carry backpacks to school
- It is estimated that more than half of these students carry more than the recommended safe weight in their school backpacks
- As the literature and research on backpack safety continue to grow, a consensus has yet to be reached regarding the severity of the pain associated with backpacks or the long-term effects of their use
- Improper use of backpacks can lead to muscle and joint injuries in the back, neck and shoulders. It may also lead to postural problems. (See pictures below)



Choosing a Backpack

Look for the following:

- Wide, padded shoulder straps
- Two shoulder straps
- Padded back
- Waist strap
- Lightweight
- Multiple pockets



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Backpack Features

- Wide, padded shoulder straps- Narrow straps can dig into shoulders, causing pain and restricting circulation.
- Two shoulder straps-Backpacks with one shoulder strap cannot distribute weight evenly; therefore, both straps should be worn.
- Padded back- A padded back protects against sharp edges on objects inside the pack and increases comfort.
- Waist strap- A waist strap can distribute the weight of a heavy load more evenly and help stabilize the backpack.
- Lightweight backpack- The weight of the pack should not add much weight to the load
- Rolling backpack- This type of pack may be a good choice for students who tote a heavy load. Remember that rolling packs still must be carried up stairs or rolled through snow.

Backpack Tips

***Always use both straps** to avoid straining muscles. Wearing on one shoulder can increase the curvature of the spine

***Tighten the straps** so that the pack is close to the body. The pack should not extend more than 4" below the child's waistline. This will minimize forward lean, which could put undue stress on the child's lumbar spine.

***Pack light.** The backpack should never weigh more than 10 to 15% of the child's total body weight. For example, a child weighing 80lbs. should not carry more than 12 pounds in their bag.

***Pack the heaviest books against the child's body** to help maintain the child's center of gravity.

***Utilize all of the pack's pockets** to help evenly distribute weight and balance the load.

