



Backpack Tips

Aching back and shoulders...weakened muscles... tingling arms...stooped posture. Does your child have these symptoms after wearing a heavy school backpack? Carrying too much weight in a pack or wearing it the wrong way can lead to pain and strain. Parents can take steps to help children load and wear backpacks the right way to avoid health problems.

Loading a backpack

- Never let a child carry more than 15% of his or her body weight.
- Load heaviest items closest to the child's back (the back of the pack).
- Arrange books and materials so they won't slid around in the backpack
- Check what your child carries to school and brings home. Make sure all the items are necessary to the day's activities.
- On days the backpack is too loaded, your child can hand carry a book or other item.
- If the backpack is too heavy, consider using a book bag on wheels if your child's school allows it.

Wearing a backpack

- Both straps should always be worn. Wearing a pack slung over one shoulder can cause a child to lean to one side, curving the spine and causing pain or discomfort.
- Select a pack with well-padded shoulder straps. Shoulders and necks have many blood vessels and nerves that can cause pain and tingling in the neck, arms, and hands when too much pressure is applied.
- Adjust the shoulder straps so that the pack fits snugly to the child's back. A pack that hangs loosely from the back can pull the child backwards and strain muscles.
- Wear the waist belt if the backpack has one. This helps to distribute the pack's weight more evenly.
- The bottom of the pack should rest in the curve of the lower back. It should never rest more than four inches below the child's waistline.
- School backpacks come in different sizes for different ages. Choose the right size pack for your child's back as well as one with enough room for necessary school items.