

Backpack Safety



Backpacks are extremely handy when used correctly!

Compared to shoulder bags, messenger bags, or purses, backpacks are better because they are supported by the back and abdomen muscles.

However, if backpacks are used improperly or are too heavy, there is risk of straining muscles and joints and back pain may develop.

Problems Backpacks May Cause

- When a heavy weight is placed incorrectly on the shoulders, people compensate by bending forward at the hips or arch the back, this is an unnatural position
- When backpacks are carried over one shoulder people may lean to one side to offset the extra weight, this may cause lower and upper back pain
- Improper backpack use can lead to poor posture
- A heavy backpack changes the way kids walk and can increase the risk of falling

Purchasing a Safe Backpack

1. Find a lightweight pack (traditional canvas)
2. Recommend kids carry no more than 10% to 15% of their body weight
3. Find a pack with two wide, padded shoulder straps (straps that are too narrow can dig into the shoulders and cause pain)
4. Look for a padded back (gives increased comfort and protection against sharp edges on objects inside the pack, like a pencil)
5. Waist belt and multiple compartments (helps to distribute the weight evenly across the body)
6. If carrying a backpack on your back causes discomfort try a rolling backpack!

Tips to Packing Light!

- Encourage kids to use their lockers and desks throughout the day
- Don't bring unnecessary items
- Bring only the books needed for homework home
- Pick up the backpack the right way to avoid back injuries (bend at the knees and grab the pack with both hands)
- Use all backpack compartments, put heavier items closest to the center of the back