

Backpacks are a Pain in the Neck...and Back

Chiropractors weigh-in on a heavy topic.

School kids today not only have a lot on their minds, statistics show that they are also carrying a heavy load on their backs. You need only watch how students struggle while they walk with their overloaded backpacks to understand the potential health risks to the back and spine. Continually hauling heavy backpacks can cause stress to the developing spinal column, neck, arms, joints, and muscles of growing children.

To prevent pain and injury from an overloaded backpack it is important to recognize the correct way to choose, pack, lift, and carry a backpack.

Choosing a backpack

Make sure that the backpack is made of lightweight material, has two wide, adjustable shoulder straps, a waist belt, several individual pockets, a padded back and is proportionate to the child's body size. It should not extend beyond a child's shoulders or below the top of their hipbones.

Packing a backpack

The load in a backpack should not exceed 10 per cent of an elementary student's bodyweight and 15 per cent for those in secondary school. The contents should be evenly distributed with heavy items packed closely to the body.

Lifting and carrying a backpack

When putting the backpack on, a child should place it on a table or chair, bend at the knees and lift with the legs while putting on one shoulder strap at a time. Before your child walks out the door encourage him/her to wear both straps so the bag fits comfortably and is close to the body.

Chiropractic. Treatment that stands up

If your child begins to experience back pain, chiropractic treatment may help. Doctors of Chiropractic are back care specialists, who offer hands-on treatment that targets the source of pain. For more information on back care and safety visit the Ontario Chiropractic Association Web site at www.chiropractic.on.ca or call 1877-327-2273.

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