

# Pack it Light. Wear it Right.

It's common for kids to lug around backpacks appearing to be twice their body weight. Though it may seem cool to sling a heavy load over one shoulder – long-term head, neck and shoulder pain is not. Here are some helpful tips that will help your child carry their backpack with ease.

## BACKPACKS CAN AFFECT YOUR CHILD'S HEALTH

Carrying a heavy load can lead to poor posture and a distorted spinal column. Over time this can cause muscle strain, headaches, back, neck and arm pain, and even nerve damage.

A heavy backpack carried on one shoulder forces the muscles and spine to compensate for the uneven weight. This places stress on the mid and lower back.



Carrying a heavy backpack is a spinal health hazard and over time may lead to altered posture and gait.



# 50%

WILL EXPERIENCE LOWER BACK PAIN

Research indicates that during the teenage years more than 50 per cent of young people will experience at least one episode of lower back pain. If your child complains of back pain and numbness or weakness in their arms and legs, consult a chiropractor for an evaluation.

## PREVENTION IS KEY

### Choose the right backpack

- Select a lightweight backpack in vinyl or canvas.
- Pick a backpack with two wide, adjustable and padded shoulder straps, along with a hip or waist strap, and padded back.
- Try the backpack for fit and comfort – ensure it's not too snug around the shoulders and armpits, and that it's proportionate to the wearer's body type.

### Packing it properly

- Your child's backpack should only contain what is needed for that day.
- A full backpack should be no more than 10 to 15 per cent of the wearer's body weight.
- Place the heaviest objects close to the body and light or odd-shaped objects away from the back.

### Putting the backpack on

- Place the backpack on a flat surface and slip on the backpack one shoulder at a time, adjust the straps to fit comfortably.
- When lifting the backpack use both arms and legs, and bend at the knees - give young children a hand.

### Wearing a backpack

- Backpacks should never be worn over only one shoulder – this can result in neck, shoulder and back pain.
- Both shoulder straps should be used and adjusted so the backpack sits flush against the back.
- Test the fit of the backpack by sliding your hand between the backpack and your child's back – if you can't slide your hand in, the backpack is too snug.



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## 10 TIPS FOR A HEALTHY BACK

1. Exercise regularly.
2. Follow a healthy diet.
3. Maintain good posture.
4. Warm up and cool down before and after physical activity.
5. Don't overload your backpack or shoulder bag.
6. Stretch your legs and back after each hour of sitting.
7. Never cradle the phone between your neck and shoulder.
8. Sleep on your back or side, not on your stomach.
9. Invest in a good chair, pillow and mattress.
10. Have regular spinal check ups.