



Teach your children how to safely use their backpacks

Further Information:

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BACKPACK SAFETY BASICS

Orchard Park Central School District

References:

- <http://www.aota.org>
<http://www.kidshealth.org>
- Goodgold S, Corcoran M, Gamache D, et al. Backpack Use in Children. *Pediatr Phys Ther.* 2002;14:122-131.
- Feingold A and Jacobs K. The effect of education on backpack wearing and posture in a middle school population. *Work.* 2002;18(3):287-294.
- Chullino M. Children and Backpack Safety. National Safety Council – Nebraska Nurses Association. 2013.



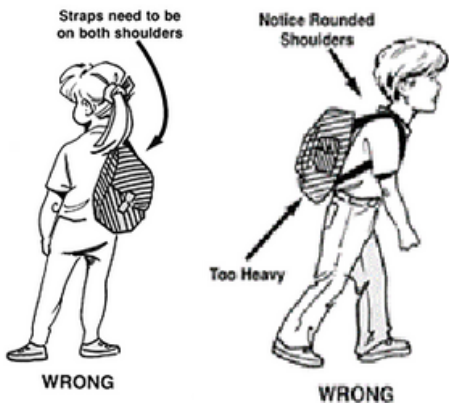
• In a study, researchers concluded that 55% out of 345 middle school students carried a backpack that was greater than 15% of their body weight. (Goodgold et al)

• In another study on the effect of backpack education on student behavior and health, nearly 8 out of 10 middle school students who changed how they loaded and wore their backpacks reported less pain and strain in their backs, necks, and shoulders. (Feingold and Jacobs)



Proper Fitting:

- Utilize two wide, padded straps.
- The bottom of the backpack should rest no lower than two inches below the child's waistline.
- The top of the backpack should not extend past the top of the shoulders.
- The width of the backpack should range from ridge of shoulder blade to ridge of other shoulder blade.
- Utilize a backpack made of durable but lightweight materials.



Warning Signs/Red Flags:

Complaints of back or shoulder pain while wearing the backpack

Tingling or numbness in the legs or arms

Weakened Muscles and/or Hunched Posture

Difficulty putting on or taking off backpack



According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, in 2010 nearly 28,000 strains, sprains, dislocations, and fractures from backpacks were treated in hospital ERs, physicians' offices, and clinics.

Helpful Tips:

- Your child's backpack should weigh no more than 12% of their body weight at any time. For example, an 80-pound child should be limited to carrying a backpack that is 10 pounds or less.
- Ensure a symmetrical load over both shoulders, NOT using only one strap.
- Tighten the shoulder straps to keep the backpack close to the child and at the height of the waistline.
- Load the heaviest items closest to the child.
- Have the child carry the heaviest book in his or her hands, as needed.
- Utilize the waist belt and sternum strap, if possible.
- Use various compartments and load supplies evenly throughout to distribute load.
- Monitor what your child brings to and from school to ensure necessity and reduce the load.
- Encourage more frequent locker use.

