

Backpack Safety Tips

Wear Both Straps

Use of 1 strap causes one side of the body to bear the weight of the backpack. By wearing 2 (both) shoulder straps, the weight of the backpack is more evenly distributed.



Position the backpack over the strongest mid-back muscles

- The backpack should rest evenly in the middle of the midback.
- Shoulder straps should be loose enough to put on and take off the backpack without difficulty, and allow free movement of the arms. But the straps should not be so loose that the backpack extends below the low back, or rest on the buttocks.
- Use the chest and waist straps for additional support.
- Ideally, the back of the backpack should be padded, and if there are compression straps, they should be used to bring contents of the backpack closer to the spine.

Lighten the load

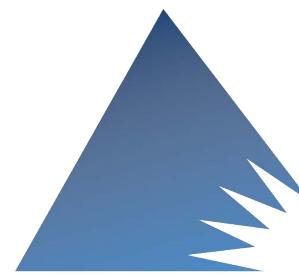
- Keep the load at 10%-15% or less of the child's body weight.
- Children come in all shapes and sizes. So do backpacks. Pick a backpack that is the correct size for your child.
- Carry only those items that are required for the day. Some students have 2 sets of books, so as not to have to carry the heavy books to and from school. Reassess and repack each day, so that unnecessary items do not remain in the backpack.
- Keep the backpack load evenly distributed. Organize the contents by placing the heaviest items closest to the back.

HOW WE CAN HELP

Consult us if your child complains of neck, shoulder, or back pain that you think might be related to an ill-fitting backpack.

Some children have physical limitations that might require special adaptations. A physical therapist can help determine the best fit to help avoid further injury or pain.





**Blue Hills
SPORTS & SPINE
Rehabilitation**

Physical Therapists Offer Backpack Safety Tips



WRONG

Strap on one shoulder
of body weight

CORRECT

Wide, padded straps on
both shoulders

WRONG

Load too heavy

CORRECT

Load no more than 10%-15%
of body weight

✓ **Wear both straps**

Use of one strap causes one side of the body to bear the weight of the backpack. By wearing 2 shoulder straps, the weight of the backpack is better distributed.

✓ **Wear the backpack over the strongest mid-back muscles**

Pay close attention to the way the backpack is positioned on the back. It should rest evenly in the middle of the back. Shoulder straps should be adjusted to allow the child to put on and take off the backpack without difficulty and allow free movement of the arms. Straps should not be too loose, and the backpack should not extend below the low back.

✓ **Lighten the load**

Keep the load at 10%-15% or less of the child's body weight. Carry only those items that are required for the day. Organize the contents of the backpack by placing the heaviest items closest to the back. Some students have 2 sets of books, so as not to have to carry the heavy books to and from school.

How a Physical Therapist Can Help

A physical therapist can help you choose a proper backpack and fit it specifically to your child. Children come in all shapes and sizes, and some have physical limitations that require special adaptations. Additionally, a physical therapist can help improve posture problems, correct muscle imbalances, and treat pain that can result from improper backpack use. Physical therapists can also design individualized fitness programs to help children get strong and stay strong—and carry their own loads!

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