

BACKPACK SAFETY FACT SHEET



Unfortunately, back pain is starting earlier and earlier, often due to unsafe use of backpacks in schools. It is important to learn the proper backpack lifting and carrying techniques.

According to Kevin E. Macadaeg, M.D., a spinal diagnostic specialist with Indiana Spine Group, the weight of a backpack should not exceed 10% to 15% of a child's body weight.

TIPS FOR BACKPACKS

Selecting A Backpack

- Consider a backpack with wheels or a metal frame, remember it may have to be carried up stairs. (Check with your child's school to determine their policy for backpacks with wheels.)
- Select packs with two wide, padded straps that go over both shoulders.
- Select a backpack with a chest belt - this helps to distribute weight evenly.

Using A Backpack

- Limit the weight of the backpack and carry only essential items. Store additional books or supplies in lockers or at home.
- Encourage students to go to their lockers between classes, if time allows.
- Carry heavier items close to the body and bulky items pointing away.
- Pick up the pack by bending at the knees and using both hands.

Other Helpful Tips

- Consider purchasing an extra set of books for home, or buy books on CD-ROM when available.
- Strengthen the stabilizing muscles of the lower back and abdomen i.e. with weight training or other back strengthening exercises.

Warning Signs

If a backpack is too heavy, a child may arch the back or lean forward to compensate. This can result in muscle, back or joint stress or injury. If your child complains of back pain or numbness or weakness in the arms or legs - his or her backpack may be too heavy. If the problem continues, see your physician.

This information is provided by Indiana Spine Group.

