***Why is Backpack Safety so Important?***

* Kids wear their backpacks on a daily basis, so the loads it creates can influence their development.
* Improper use of backpacks can cause musculoskeletal problems that can carry on into adulthood.
* Backpacks that are too heavy can cause bad posture as well as spine and muscle injury.

* Children are more at risk to these issues because they are still growing and developing.
* Over time the body compensates for any load it carries which can result in rounding of the shoulders, distortion of the natural spinal curvatures, irritation to joints, and a shift in the natural center of gravity creating reduced balance.

Is your child’s backpack hurting their spine?

**For more information**

References:

American Academy of pediatrics:

www.aap.org

Backpack Safety America:

www.backpacksafe.com

American Chiropractic Association:

www.acatoday.org/Patients/Health-wellness-Information/Backpack-Safety

University of Pittsburg Medical Center:

www.UPMC.com



**Backpack Safety Tips**

**4 Things to Remember about Backpack Safety**

1. **Choose the right backpack**

Choosing the right size backpack is the most important part of safety. If you have a bunch of extra space your child is going to fill it.

1. **Load it Right.** A backpack should never be more than 5-10% of the child’s body weight. If the pack forces the user to bend forward it’s a sure sign that it is overloaded. Heavier items should be loaded closest to the child’s back
2. **Lift it right.** To pick up the pack face it, bend at the knees keeping a straight back, and lift with the legs.
3. **Wear it Right.** Always use both shoulder straps and have the pack fit snug. Not too loose or tight. It shouldn’t hang more than 4 inches below the waistline. This will ensure equal loading on the body.

**How to Pick the Right Backpack.**

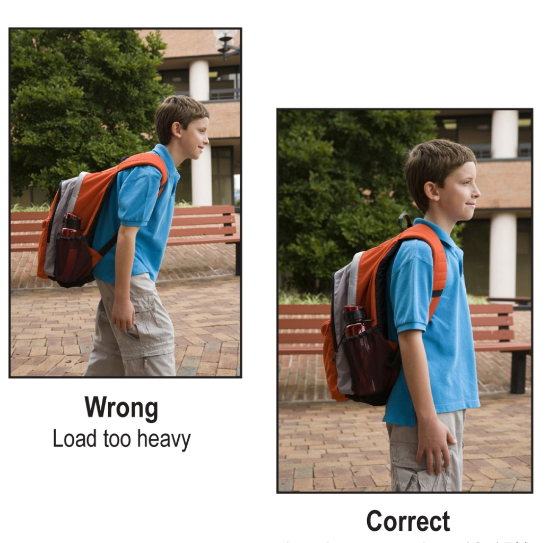
1. Pick a lightweight material like cotton canvas, polyester or Nylon
2. Wide padded shoulder straps to cushion the shoulders and distribute the weight more evenly.
3. Padded back to protect from sharp objects and make it more comfortable.
4. A waist belt reduces too much movement to keep even weight distribution.
5. Multiple compartments allow even weight distribution and organization**.**



**Signs of a bad backpack**

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Some kids think using one strap looks cool, but back pain doesn’t look cool.

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If they are leaning forward it’s a sign that the bag is too heavy