

# All You Need to Know About Wearing Your Backpack Safely!

**"Oh, my back hurts when I carry by backpack!"**

Sound familiar? September brings an influx of kids to the emergency room, their Pediatrician or their Physical Therapist. Andrea Mitchell, MSPT, LMT presents these points to prevent back and shoulder pain.

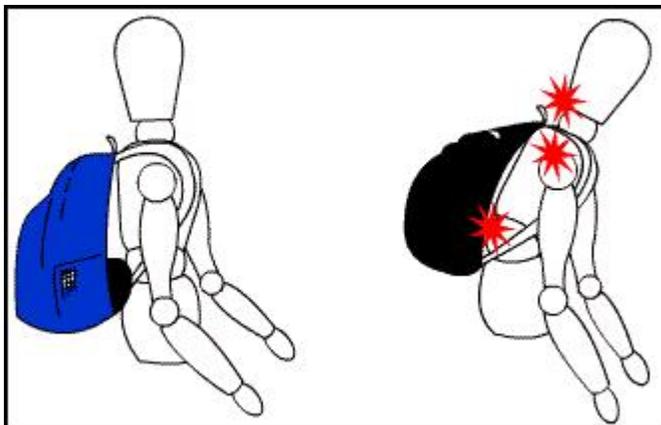
- Don't let your backpacks weight exceed 15% of your body weight. To find the maximum weight you should carry, use this formula:  
**Your weight (lbs) X 0.15 = Max bag weight (lbs)**
- Use a hip strap for heavier weights to help stabilize the pack & transfer the weight to your torso and hips.
- Use a backpack with TWO wide padded straps and a padded back.
- Always use both of your backpack straps, firmly and tightened, holding the pack 2 inches above your waist.
- Place the heavier items close to your back. Packs with multiple compartments are great to distribute the weight more evenly.
- Never wear your backpack on one shoulder, or so low that it touches your buttocks.
- Try to make frequent stops to your locker to replace books.



According to *July 2008, Consumer's Report*, sixth graders especially carry a heavy load in their backpacks due to a lot of homework that many are given. And with that said, comes an excess of heavier books that they must lug around on their backs. The latest Consumer Report continues to say, sixth graders are carrying around approximately 18.4 pounds on their backs daily. Yet, it's not just the sixth graders; you have the little second graders carrying 5.3 pounds and fourth graders carrying 4.6 pounds.

On top of this, the study by Consumer Reports showed that sixth graders were carrying this heavy load up three flights of stairs - complaining of bruises and the heaviness of their books.

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, children should not be carrying no more than 10- 20% of their total weight in their backpacks. Yet, the average percentage for a sixth grader was 17.2%, fourth grader was 5.6%, and 8.6% of a second graders body weight. This study was a small sampling of students from three classes within the same district. Yet, I'm sure you will find this to be true across the nation.



### Some Back Pack Recommendations;

High Sierra Airhead - The price of this backpack is between \$35-\$45. It has adjustable compression straps, organizer with 3 pockets, water-resistant with a hidden rain hood.

Nike B4.3 XL Mesh Backpack - The price of this backpack is around \$40. It has padded shoulder and carry comfort straps. It's waterproof, dual compartments, additional storage with a water bottle compartment. It has a lifetime guarantee with the Nike Logo.

JanSport Air Juice Daypack - This costs about \$25. It has comfortable S-curve Airlift straps, waterproof, and organizer compartments.

The North Face Yavapai Backpack - This costs about \$75. This is on the high end; however it is well designed with comfortable shoulder straps, sternum and hip straps. It is well ventilated for comfort, along with pockets for organizing. It also has compression straps to keep the load tidy.



#### How to Put Your Bag On Or Take It Off:

- ❖ Bend you knees and pick the bag up with both hands.
- ❖ Avoid twisting and lifting at the same time.
- ❖ Stand up using your leg rather than your back
- ❖ Once you are standing, slide into one shoulder strap at a time.
- ❖ To take back pack off, slide backpack off of both shoulders at the same time.



#### 5 Red Flags That Your Backpack Is Too Heavy:

1. Struggling to get the backpack on or off.
2. Pain when wearing the backpack (back, neck or shoulders being the most common).
3. Tingling or numbness in your arms.
4. Red Marks where the straps have been rubbing.
5. Changes in posture, such as bend forward at the waist while the back pack is on.

#### Did you Know?

Only 19% of high school students are active for 20 minutes or more per day!! Let's change this statistic and encourage all of our students to exercise daily!



Physical Therapy Care at its Best!



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