

ISR Physical Therapy Newsletter



Is Your Child's Backpack Safe?

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It's that time again. The time when our kids are getting ready to go back to school. When we think of our school days, what usually comes to mind is tests, homework and the pressure of "fitting in". Unfortunately, to an increasing extent, the physical burden of heavy, overstuffed backpacks can now be added to the list. Over the past several years, complaints of back pain and injuries have risen among school children of all ages. As a result, awareness has grown among health professionals, educators, and parents that overweight backpacks are likely to be a strong contributing factor to the trend. The problem is not with the backpacks themselves sources agree, but with the books and other equipment young people are jamming into the bags they sling onto their backs.

Guidelines For Backpack Use From The American Academy Of Orthopedic Surgeons

- The backpack's weight should not exceed 20% of your body weight (even less for a young child).*
- A hip strap should be used for heavier weights.*
- Wide, padded straps and a padded back are recommended to improve weight distribution and comfort.*
- The backpack's straps should be adjusted to hold the pack two inches above the waist.*
- Engage in exercises to strengthen back muscles. Ask an orthopedic specialist or physical therapist for advice.*
- Avoid bending over at the waist while wearing a backpack. Bend with both knees when picking up a heavy backpack, and lift with your legs.*
- Pack your backpack neatly, and try to keep items in place. Heavier books should be placed in the pack closer to the back to reduce strain and disc pressure.*
- Keep the weight in the backpack to a minimum. Try to make frequent trips to your locker between classes to replace your books.*
- Consider using a backpack with wheels.*

"No Excuses, Just Results!"

Remember, it is important to not only purchase a well designed backpack but to also wear it correctly. The best designed pack will still cause back strain if not used properly. We hope this information is useful to you and your family.



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