



Your Child and Backpacks

While carrying a backpack can seem harmless enough it can cause some painful back and neck problems for students who don't pack or carry their back packs properly. Back pain can begin at an early age as a misalignment of the spine. Improper use of backpacks can lead to muscle imbalance that could turn into chronic back and neck pain later in life. In fact, the **U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission reports that backpack-related injuries sent more than 7,000 people to the emergency room in 2001 alone**



What can you do to protect your children? Here are some tips Dr. Linder recommends:

- ◆ Make sure your child's backpack weighs no more than 5 to 10 percent of his or her body weight. If the backpack is heavier, it will cause your child to begin bending forward in an attempt to support the weight on his or her back rather than on the shoulders, by the straps.
- ◆ A backpack with individualized compartments will help in positioning the contents most effectively. Pack the heavier objects closer to the back (always speak to your child about leaving the heavier books at school if possible). When packing the backpack, make sure that pointy or bulky objects are packed away from the area that will rest on your child's back. An uneven surface rubbing against your child's back could cause painful blisters.
- ◆ It is important that your child wears both shoulder straps. Lugging the backpack around one shoulder strap can cause the disproportionate shift of weight to one side, leading to neck and muscle spasms as well as low back pain.
- ◆ Padded straps are very important. Non-padded straps are uncomfortable, and usually dig into your child's shoulders
- ◆ The shoulder straps should be adjustable, so the backpack can be fitted to your child's body. Shoulder straps that are too loose can cause the backpack to dangle uncomfortably and cause spinal misalignment and pain.
- ◆ **Talk to your child** about the proper use of backpacks and help him or her understand why this and other ergonomic issues are important. A child who is educated early in life on the importance of ergonomic issues can apply this knowledge later in life, at home or the office, and will be happier and healthier as a result.

If you or your child experiences any pain or discomfort in their neck, shoulders, arms, legs or back call your chiropractor to assess if backpack use could be the cause.

In good health,

Darryl T. Linder, D.C.

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Hours M, TU, W & F

9-1, 3-6

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