

# SHEPPARD CHIROPRACTIC

## BACKPACKS...YOUR CHILD'S SPINE AT RISK

Today 40 million teenagers carry a backpack to school. More and more doctors are seeing children for back pain and injuries and now that children are back in school, thousands of elementary, secondary and high school students are heading to their classes with overstuffed backpacks slung over their shoulders. The Consumer Product Safety Commission estimates more than 3,300 children age 5-14 were treated last year in the ER for book bag injuries. "It typically puts them off balance and gives them a posture that promotes low back pain," said Dr. Wayne Yankus of the American Academy of Pediatrics' Committee on School Health.

While carrying a backpack to school every morning may seem harmless enough, it can cause painful back and neck problems and injuries for students who don't pack or carry their backpacks properly. It can also lead to long-term medical problems and injuries to the spine that may last a lifetime.

Recently scientists have discovered that carrying heavy backpacks may pose a serious threat to your child's future spine development. The scientists state the average backpack represented 17% of the child's body weight. This would explain why 67.2% of the children suffered muscle soreness, 50.8% suffered back pain, 24.5% suffered numbness, and 14.7% suffered shoulder pain. Medical professionals advise that individuals carry no more than 15% of their body weight on their backs. A child weighing:

- 50 lbs. should only carry 2.5 – 5 lbs.
- 80 lbs. should only carry 4 – 8 lbs.
- 100 lbs. should only carry 5 – 10 lbs.
- 130 lbs. should only carry 6.5 – 12 lbs.
- 150 lbs. should only carry 7.5 – 15 lbs.

(Source: American Chiropractic Association)

If your child does use backpacks to carry books there are things that you can do to reduce the physical stress associated with carrying backpacks.

1. Make sure that the weight of the book bag does not exceed more than 10% of the child's total body weight. This is especially important for children in grades 1-4.
2. Avoid using backpacks or athletic bags that have one strap.
3. Ensure that children wear both straps on their shoulders to distribute weight evenly.
4. Have your child examined regularly by a chiropractor so that any potential spinal or postural problems can be addressed and corrected.
5. Use a book bag on wheels or an air cushion book bag ([www.airpacks.com](http://www.airpacks.com)) if possible.

If children are having headaches, neck pain, bad posture, achy and strained muscles, low back pain, muscle spasms, tingling hands, and increases scoliosis complications, they are carrying too much weight improperly.

***For more information, please contact  
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