



Teach your children how to safely use their backpacks

## Further Information:

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## BACKPACK BASICS: A PARENTS' GUIDE

Orchard Park Central School District

### References:

- <http://www.aota.org>  
<http://www.kidshealth.org>
- Goodgold S, Corcoran M, Gamache D, et al. Backpack Use in Children. *Pediatr Phys Ther.* 2002;14:122-131.
- Feingold A and Jacobs K. The effect of education on backpack wearing and posture in a middle school population. *Work.* 2002;18(3):287-294.
- Chullino M. Children and Backpack Safety. National Safety Council – Nebraska Nurses Association. 2013.



• In a study, researchers concluded that 55% out of 345 middle school students carried a backpack that was greater than 15% of their body weight. (Goodgold et al)

• In another study on the effect of backpack education on student behavior and health, nearly 8 out of 10 middle school students who changed how they loaded and wore their backpacks reported less pain and strain in their backs, necks, and shoulders. (Feingold and Jacobs)



## Warning Signs/Red Flags:

Complaints of back or shoulder pain while wearing the backpack

Tingling or numbness in the legs or arms

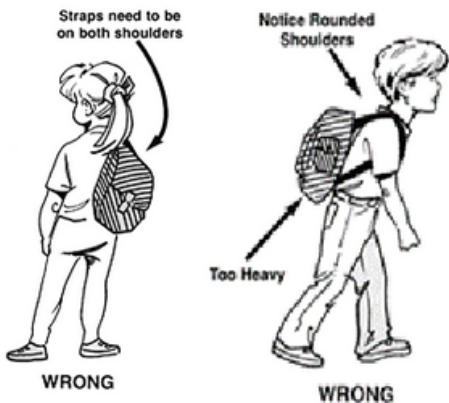
Weakened Muscles and/or Hunched Posture

Difficulty putting on or taking off backpack



## Proper Fitting:

- Utilize two wide, padded straps.
- The bottom of the backpack should rest no lower than two inches below the child's waistline.
- The top of the backpack should not extend past the top of the shoulders.
- The width of the backpack should range from ridge of shoulder blade to ridge of other shoulder blade.
- Utilize a backpack made of durable but lightweight materials.



*According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, in 2010 nearly 28,000 strains, sprains, dislocations, and fractures from backpacks were treated in hospital ERs, physicians' offices, and clinics.*

## Helpful Tips:

- Your child's backpack should weigh no more than 12% of their body weight at any time. For example, an 80-pound child should be limited to carrying a backpack that is 10 pounds or less.
- Ensure a symmetrical load over both shoulders, NOT using only one strap.
- Tighten the shoulder straps to keep the backpack close to the child and at the height of the waistline.
- Load the heaviest items closest to the child.
- Have the child carry the heaviest book in his or her hands, as needed.
- Utilize the waist belt and sternum strap, if possible.
- Use various compartments and load supplies evenly throughout to distribute load.
- Monitor what your child brings to and from school to ensure necessity and reduce the load.
- Encourage more frequent locker use.

