

# backpack safety

While a backpack is essential back-to-school equipment for most children and teens, an incorrectly used backpack dramatically increases a child's risk for musculoskeletal problems and pain. Heavy backpacks can cause back/arm ailments, such as muscle strains, muscle tightness and overall postural imbalances that can contribute to pain.

## who is most at risk for shoulder and back pain?

- All children and adolescents.
- Children previously diagnosed with spinal ailments could be more at risk. Examples include:
  - Scoliosis.
  - Kyphosis.
  - Spondylolysis and spondylolisthes.



## preventing backpack injuries

- A backpack should weigh no more than 10 percent of the child's body weight.
- Put heavier items closer to the child's body in the back pack.
- Parents should pick up their child's backpack on a regular basis to gauge its weight.
- Backpacks should be worn with one strap on each shoulder, not hanging off one shoulder.
- The backpack's straps should be fitted snugly over the child's shoulders.
- Make sure the backpack is positioned literally on the back—between the shoulders—and not resting on the child's lower back or hips.
- Have the appropriate size backpack. It should rest above the hip line.
- If your child already has back pain, he or she should use a backpack with wheels or ask for a doctor's note so the school will provide one set of books at school and one set at home.
- He or she can carry some items to balance the weight on the body.

## when should a doctor be called?

Children do not normally have back pain. If a child is complaining about back pain, make an appointment with the child's physician.



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