

# Backpacks and Bookbags

Contributed by admin  
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While children may only think of their backpack as a fashion statement, and a means to lug around all of their necessities. There are many things that their parents must consider, for the sake of their child's health. Often times backpack safety takes a back seat to the fashion trends of the year, however it is quite easy to get the best of both worlds as long as you are well educated. Keep in mind while you and your child are shopping for this school year's backpack, that you will not only need to have your budget on the brain; educate your child on the importance of safely wearing their backpacks.

This is especially important because as helpful as backpacks are in a child's school career, they can also strain muscles and joints; which can lead to severe back pain throughout their life.

Many people may stop to think, that many factors in life may cause back pain; however this is especially true for children who are packing around a whole lockers worth of books upon one shoulder. While the trend with children is to avoid using their lockers and desk space at school, most doctors and physical therapists suggest that your child carry no more than ten to fifteen percent of their body weight within their packs. To fully comprehend the problems that can be caused on your child's back; it is important to know how the back works. Your child's spine is composed of thirty three bones which are called the vertebrae. Between the vertebrae lie discs which act as a natural shock absorber. However when heavy weight (IE: a heavy backpack that is filled to the brim with books, school supplies, and personal items) which is not properly placed upon your child's shoulders (such as the one shoulder lugging trend) can cause the weight to force your child backward. Usually to compensate a child may bend forward at their hips or arch their backs. This of course will cause your child's spine to compress in an unnatural way and may lead to shoulder, neck and back pain.

When you are looking for a pack it is important to select a lightweight backpack, that has two wide and padded shoulder straps; since wearing too narrow of straps can dig into the shoulders and cause poor circulation. You should look for a pack that has a padded back which will aid in comfort, and protect your child from being poked by sharp objects that are in the pack. The backpack should also have a waist belt which will help distribute the weight more evenly over the body. Also, remember that although a wheeled backpack is a good idea they do have their downfalls, they are relatively difficult to wheel through snow and up stairs. If you consider purchasing this type of pack, you should contact your child's school to verify that they are allowed.

Educate your child on how to properly use their backpack, I have listed a few key items that you may want to consider talking with your child about.

- \* Lighten the load that they are carrying. Only have them carry the necessities, and discourage them from taking unnecessary things to and from school.
- \* Encourage them to use their locker or desk space more frequently.
- \* Tell them to bring only the books they will need for homework home for the night.
- \* Ask your child about their homework plan.
- \* Use all of the pack's available compartments which will help in distributing the weight.