

## Kids' Backpacks are Tipping the Scales

Have you seen the size of school children's backpacks? They're huge! The average child carries a backpack that would be the equivalent of a 39 pound burden for a 176 pound man. These big packs are hurting our children's backs and ruining their posture. Of the children in a recent study, 60% had experienced back pain as a result of carrying a heavy backpack. Let's look at some solutions.

Make sure the backpack weighs no more than 10% of the child's body weight. You may choose a smaller backpack, large enough to fit only what is necessary. The more room there is, the more the child will carry.

I realize that the baggy look is in fashion, but that posture, which is already hazardous to the spine, is worse when the backpack is hanging more than four inches below the child's waist.

When choosing a backpack, it helps to pick one with individualized compartments, so we can position the contents in a more thoughtful and balanced fashion. Place the pointy and bulky objects away from the child's back and evenly distribute the weight top to bottom and front to back.

Choose a pack with wide and adjustable shoulder straps to exactly fit his or her body. Straps that are too loose cause the pack to dangle, leading to back injuries. Always wear both shoulder straps. Carrying all the weight on one shoulder leads to neck, shoulder and back pain.

Children with back pain become adults with back pain. When the pack is too heavy or too low your child will have to lean forward when walking, straining his or her spine. With a few changes and forethought you can give you're child a healthier back and neck. Take the time to talk with your child, and the school if necessary, to ensure good spinal health today and in the future.

Yours in health,

Dr. Rick

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