

Keep Kids' Backpacks on Track



One of the most important back-to-school essentials for your child is a backpack. When you go shopping for one, be sure you are looking for an ergonomic design. A backpack that is too heavy for your child can cause problems like back and shoulder pain and injuries. For best health, kids should wear backpacks the right way and at the right weight. The California Chiropractic Association developed the following checklist for backpack safety.

Backpack Safety Checklist

What to look for in a backpack:

- ✓ Sturdy and correctly sized
narrower and shorter than your child's torso
- ✓ Padded back and shoulder straps
- ✓ Lumbar support and waist belt
- ✓ Multiple compartments

Correctly Wearing a Backpack

- ✓ Load heavier items closest to the back
- ✓ Wear both shoulder straps at all times
- ✓ Tighten straps until snug but not tight
- ✓ Use the stabilizing waist strap
- ✓ Take the backpack off when standing still

If your child's backpack tends to weigh more than recommended:

- Limit the contents—make sure your child is only carrying the essentials.
- Check with your child's teacher about textbook alternatives—many schools offer digital or paperback textbooks, extra copies of textbooks to keep at home, day-use desks and lockers and other options to minimize backpack loads during the day.

Backpacks on wheels may seem like a good option, but the American Chiropractic Association says rolling backpacks are hard to use properly in crowded hallways and can be a tripping hazard, so proceed with caution.

Sources: American Chiropractic Association, California Chiropractic Association, National Safety Council