

ATHLETE'S EDGE



Back to School: Backpack Issue

Important Features

When purchasing a backpack, the Canadian Physiotherapy Association recommends the following:

- **Two wide, padded shoulder straps** act to distribute the load over the shoulders.
- **A padded back** makes the pack more comfortable.
- **Lumbar support** helps to prevent slouching.

- **Proper size**

The backpack should not be larger than the size of the individual's back.

- **Lightweight**

Should not be carrying more than 15% of your body weight, so it is important that the pack itself does not add a lot of weight to the total load of the pack.

- **Waist/hip belt**

Helps to transfer the load to the hips. A strap between the shoulder straps can also be helpful to prevent slouching.

- **Reflective material**

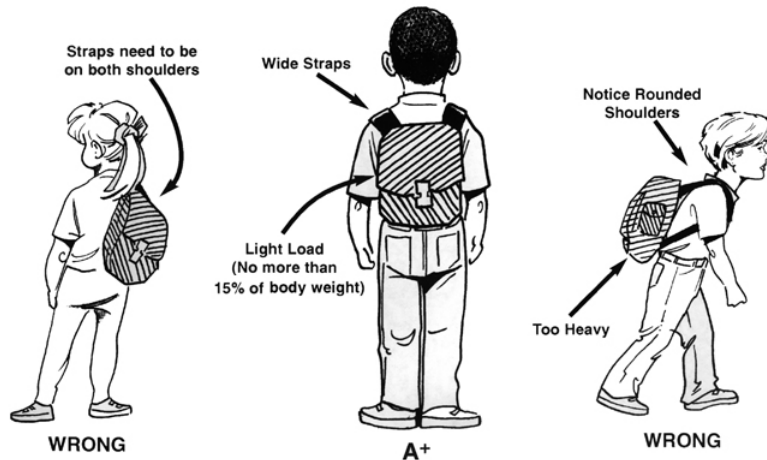
For visibility to drivers at night

Potential Problems

All too often packs are improper size, over loaded, and poorly balanced on one shoulder. This may result in unnatural compression of the spine which may develop into back shoulder or neck pain.

Backpacks that are poorly made and have straps that are too narrow dig into the shoulders. Children may complain of tingling, numbness and weakness in the arms and hands.

Is Your Child's Backpack Making The Grade? Myths and Facts



MYTH: The heaviest items should be placed at the bottom of the pack.

FACT: Heavy objects should be placed in the middle of the pack where they will be closest to your back. If you place too many heavy objects near the top or bottom of the pack you will have to adjust your posture to accommodate the load.

Did you know?

55% of students carry backpacks that exceed 15% of their weight (as reported by Simmons College in 2001)

According to the consumer product safety commission backpack injuries have increased by almost 300%

Backpack Definition: A backpack (also called rucksack, knapsack, packsack, pack, or Bergan) is, in its simplest form, a cloth sack carried on one's back and secured with two straps that go over the shoulders.

Continued on Reverse

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50,000 active
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Backpack Options

There are several styles of packs. A saddle bag design goes over the head and has pockets on both the back and front allowing for weight to be distributed over a greater area. Backpacks with wheels can also be a good option as long as the handle is long enough to prevent stooping. However, they can cause problems on stairs and during the winter as they are

hard to pull up stairs and through the snow. Shoulder bags, however, are not a good option because they result in the weight being placed on only half of the support area available.

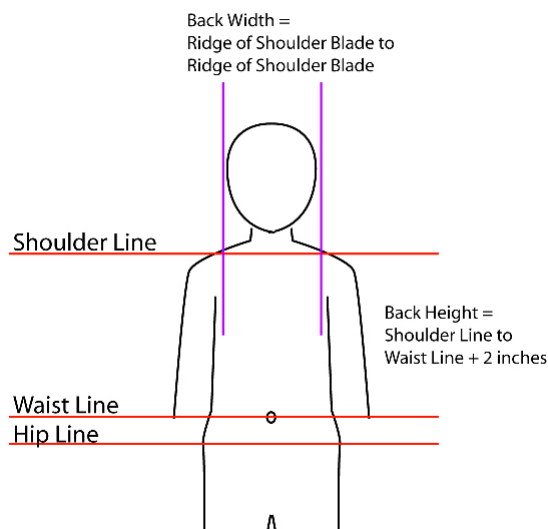
Choose a backpack that has several individual pockets instead of one large compartment, this will help to distribute the weight evenly and keep contents from shifting.

BACKPACK TIPS

1. Use both straps to carry the pack. Using only one strap will increase the potential for back pain.
2. Straps must be long enough. If you very tall you will need a pack with extra length. The pack should hang slightly below the shoulders with no more than 4 inches below the belly button.
3. Arms should be able to move freely.
4. The bottom of the pack should "sit" evenly in the middle of the back , not "sag down" toward the buttocks".
5. Adjust the hip belt correctly. The pack should rest above your hip bones.

How To Size a Child's Back for a Backpack

Fitting Guide for a Child's Backpack



Find the maximum height by measuring from the shoulder line to the waistline and then add 2 inches. The backpack should

be two inches below the shoulders and up to four inches below the waist line. For the width of the pack measure between the ridges of the shoulder blades and add an inch or two.

Final Thought

Physiotherapists are regulated health care professionals who have the knowledge and skills to help relieve pain, increase mobility, build strength, and improve balance.

At WSM a physiotherapist will assess the injury and provide appropriate treatment to help you get back up to speed as well as give advice on how to prevent recurrence of the injury.