



Children's
REHAB CENTER

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Backpack Safety

Aching backs and shoulders? Tingling arms? Stooped posture? Do you notice children with these symptoms after wearing a heavy backpack? In 2013, nearly 22,200 strains, sprains, dislocations, and fractures from backpacks were treated in hospital emergency rooms, physicians' offices, and clinics!

Backpacks should weigh no more than 10% of a child's weight. As schools are back in session once again, here's tips to help prevent backpack injuries!

Loading a Backpack

- Load heaviest items closest to the child's back.
- Arrange books and materials so they won't slide around in the backpack.
- Utilize different compartments and pockets to distribute weight
- Check what children pack in their bag. Make sure the items are necessary for the day's activities.
- Teach your child to pick up the backpack by bending and lifting in the knees instead of the waist.

Wearing a Backpack

- Distribute weight evenly by using both straps. Wearing a backpack slung over one shoulder can cause a child to lean to one side, curving the spine and causing pain or discomfort.
- Choose a backpack with well-padded shoulder straps. Shoulders and necks have many blood vessels and nerves that can cause pain and tingling in the neck, arms, and hands when too much pressure is applied.
- Adjust the shoulder straps so the pack fits snugly on the child's back. A backpack that hangs loosely can pull the child backwards and strain muscles.
- Wear the waist belt if the backpack has one. This helps distribute the pack's weight more evenly.
- The bottom of the backpack should rest in the curve of the lower back. It should never rest more than four inches below the child's waistline.
- Backpacks come in different sizes for different ages. Choose the right backpack for their size, as well as one with enough room for necessary school items.

Just as children will try on clothes and shoes when back-to-school shopping, it is important to try on backpacks too! For more information on backpack safety, please contact any of our three locations.