



Physical Therapists Offer Backpack Safety Tips



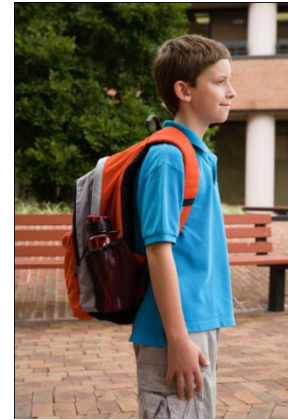
WRONG
Strap on one shoulder
of body weight



CORRECT
Wide, padded straps on
both shoulders



WRONG
Load too heavy



CORRECT
Load no more than 10%-15%
of body weight

- ✓ **Wear both straps**
Use of one strap causes one side of the body to bear the weight of the backpack. By wearing 2 shoulder straps, the weight of the backpack is better distributed.
- ✓ **Wear the backpack over the strongest mid-back muscles**
Pay close attention to the way the backpack is positioned on the back. It should rest evenly in the middle of the back. Shoulder straps should be adjusted to allow the child to put on and take off the backpack without difficulty and allow free movement of the arms. Straps should not be too loose, and the backpack should not extend below the low back.
- ✓ **Lighten the load**
Keep the load at 10%-15% or less of the child's body weight. Carry only those items that are required for the day. Organize the contents of the backpack by placing the heaviest items closest to the back. Some students have 2 sets of books, so as not to have to carry the heavy books to and from school.

How a Physical Therapist Can Help

A physical therapist can help you choose a proper backpack and fit it specifically to your child. Children come in all shapes and sizes, and some have physical limitations that require special adaptations. Additionally, a physical therapist can help improve posture problems, correct muscle imbalances, and treat pain that can result from improper backpack use. Physical therapists can also design individualized fitness programs to help children get strong and stay strong—and carry their own loads!

Find a physical therapist in your area at www.moveforwardpt.com