

Pack it light, wear it right!



A backpack safety workbook brought to you by



ALBERTA
COLLEGE AND ASSOCIATION
OF
CHIROPRACTORS

Pack it light, wear it right!

Backpack Tips

Kids and backpacks just seem to go together. Whether sending them off to school, to a sporting event or for a sleepover with a friend, chances are they are bringing a backpack. But carrying a heavy load unevenly or improperly can result in poor posture and even distort the spinal column, causing muscle strain, headaches, neck and arm pain, and even nerve damage.

More than 50 per cent of young people experience at least one episode of low back pain by their teenage years. Alberta's chiropractors offer the following tips to ensure your child's pack doesn't become a pain in the back:

Pick it Right

- Choose a bag made of lightweight material, such as vinyl or canvas.
- Pick a bag that has two wide, adjustable and padded shoulder straps, along with a hip or waist strap, a padded back and plenty of pockets.
- Ensure the bag is proportionate to body size and no larger than needed. The top of the pack should not extend higher than the top of the shoulder, and the bottom should not fall below the top of the hipbone.
- Explore other options like bags with wheels and a pull handle for easy rolling.

Pack it Light

- The total weight of the pack should not exceed 10 to 15 per cent of the wearer's body weight (depending on age).
- Make sure the backpack contains only what is needed for the day or activity.
- Spread the weight throughout the pack.
- Pack the heaviest items close to the body.

Wear it Right

- Both shoulder straps should always be used and adjusted so the pack fits snugly against the body. You should be able to slide a hand between the backpack and the wearer's back.
- The pack should sit two inches above the waist.
- Never allow your child to sling a backpack over only one shoulder.
- The waist strap reduces the strain on the back and transfers some of the load to the hips.



To ensure your child's back is healthy and strong, consult your chiropractor. They can teach you and your child how to pack, lift and carry a backpack properly to prevent injury. More information, including where to find a chiropractor near you, can be found at www.albertachiro.com.



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Pack it light, wear it right!

*It's easy to calculate
your maximum load!*

Lighten Your Load

Your back will thank you!

1. Weigh yourself and record it.

2. Figure out your maximum load.

It's 10% of body weight for grades k – 8 and 15% for grades 9 – 12. For example, if you're in grade five and weigh 90 lbs multiply that by 10%. (0.10 x 90 equals 9, so your maximum load is 9 lbs.) Record it on the chart.

3. Weigh your stuff.

Easy way: weigh your loaded pack on your bathroom scale and record it under loaded pack.

More accurate way: weigh each item on a kitchen scale, including your empty pack, record each item's weight and add them up for your total loaded pack weight.

4. Compare your maximum load to your loaded pack. Surprised? If you're over, maybe it's time to lighten your load!

TIP! Always make sure you carry your backpack with both straps to keep the weight even on both sides of your body. Slings your pack over one shoulder puts all the weight on one side and causes you to lean under the stress.

	lbs	kg
1. My weight		
2. My Maximum load		
3. Total weight of my loaded pack, including:		
backpack		
books		
binders		
notebooks		
shoes		
sports gear		
lunch/snack/juice		
water bottle		
drinks		
electronic devices		
pencil case		
others...		
4. I am over/under by		

What can I do to lighten my load...



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Pack it light, wear it right!

Give your body a break – don't overload your pack!
Find the hidden words to help you remember to pack it light and wear it right.

S	H	O	U	L	D	E	R	I	T	R	Q	C	H	T	E	P	F
S	B	D	P	D	F	R	B	H	W	C	H	E	F	L	N	R	E
E	N	I	P	S	T	N	G	S	C	I	A	W	Y	T	I	E	I
N	N	I	F	Y	N	I	D	C	R	L	E	T	R	S	A	S	L
R	F	D	E	S	E	E	I	O	T	B	S	R	E	U	P	S	E
Z	W	V	E	W	M	L	P	H	M	E	A	I	U	T	X	U	R
N	J	R	G	D	T	R	Y	V	F	O	I	C	W	T	L	R	K
E	D	O	Q	S	A	Z	J	I	L	I	J	L	K	I	S	E	I
R	K	R	I	C	E	O	L	F	P	E	H	X	X	P	I	O	G
V	C	C	T	N	R	Z	L	S	E	L	C	S	U	M	A	E	P
E	Q	O	A	T	T	H	N	R	I	N	J	U	R	Y	N	C	V
S	R	T	T	B	R	S	X	J	E	U	N	Z	K	T	R	V	K
K	M	Z	T	F	M	V	V	I	C	V	J	J	L	Q	Y	T	R
M	N	O	I	T	N	E	V	E	R	P	O	E	I	D	D	I	C

BACK
BACKPACK
CHIROPRACTOR
GENTLE
HEALTHY

INJURY
JOINTS
LIFESTYLE
MUSCLES
NERVES

OVERLOADED
PAIN
POSTURE
PRESSURE
PREVENTION

RELIEF
SHOULDER
SPINE
TREATMENT
WEIGHT



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Colouring Sheet



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Carrying your backpack

Don't sling it on one side – this can cause the spine to lean, putting stress on the joints and muscles in the mid and lower back.

Do wear both straps and adjust them so the pack fits snugly against your back. You should only be able to slide a hand between the backpack and your back.

Do use the waist strap to transfer some of the load to your hips and reduce the strain on your back.

Don't carry your backpack too low or it can make you lean forward, which puts the weight on your upper back and shoulders.

Tips for a healthy back

1. Exercise every day
2. Eat healthy foods and drink lots of water
3. When sitting and standing, keep your shoulders back and squared... and try not to hunch your back
4. Stretch before and after sports
5. Don't overload your pack
6. Stretch after each hour after sitting – between classes is ideal
7. Never cradle the phone between your head and shoulder
8. Sleep on your back or side instead of your stomach
9. Get a good sleep each night
10. Have annual chiropractic check-ups



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