

Backpacks: Back to School Tips



There are many consequences of improper backpack use in both the short term and the long term.

Short term → Pain, stiffness, as well as numbness/pins & needles in the back, neck, shoulders and arms

Long term → Altered alignment of the spine, damage to the vertebral discs (also known as the “shock absorbers” of the spine)

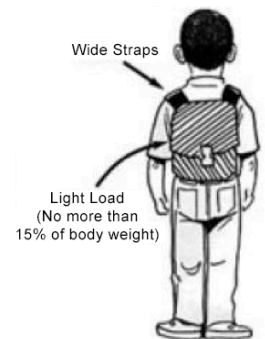
Using the Canadian Physiotherapy Association Guidelines as a reference, we have compiled some easy tips for choosing the right backpack and wearing it correctly. These simple guidelines apply to children and adults alike!

1) Choose It:

- ◆ Padding – on the back and shoulder straps
- ◆ Straps – wide shoulder straps (~2 inches) and a hip strap to help distribute weight
- ◆ Depth – shallower bags help keep weight close to your centre of gravity (or look for compression straps to help stabilize the weight close to your back)
- ◆ Height – between your shoulders and hips
- ◆ Width – no wider than your back

2) Pack It:

- ◆ Less than 15% of your body weight
- ◆ Pack only what you need and take advantage of your locker or desk space to avoid carrying all your belongings all day
- ◆ Heavy items close to your back and centered in the bag



3) Wear It:

- ◆ Lift the bag using your legs (bend your knees instead of your back)
- ◆ Put the bag on a flat surface behind you then put on one shoulder strap at a time
- ◆ Always wear both shoulder straps (and the hip strap if you have it)
- ◆ Straps should be tight enough so the bottom of the bag sits at the top of the hips, but loose enough so your arms can move freely
- ◆ Stand and walk with your ears, shoulders, and hips in a vertical line
- ◆ If you use a shoulder or wheeled bag, be sure to switch the shoulder/hand you carry it with regularly to avoid developing imbalances.



If you have developed back or shoulder pain as a result of carrying bags, backpacks, or purses please contact us to see how Body Works Sports Physiotherapy can help you.

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