

Backpack Safety Stats on the Injuries

A. Heavy loads carried by more than 79 million students across the U.S. can cause low back pain that often lasts through adulthood.

B. According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, in 2013 nearly 22,200 strains, sprains, dislocations, and fractures from backpacks were treated in hospital emergency rooms, physicians' offices, and clinics.

C. A backpack should weigh no more than 10% of the child's body weight.



Find backpack safety tips at www.aota.org/backpack

TIPS FOR PURCHASING A BACKPACK



The American Occupational Therapy Association (OTA) urges parents and caregivers to consider the following when selecting a backpack this school year:

APPROPRIATE SIZE. Make sure the height of the backpack extends from approximately 2 inches below the shoulder blades to waist level, or slightly above the waist.

SHOULDERS. Backpacks should have well-padded shoulder straps that can be worn on both shoulders so when packed with books, the weight can be evenly balanced by the student.

HIP BELT. Backpacks with a hip or chest belt take some strain off sensitive neck and shoulder muscles and improve the student's balance.

FIT. Just as your child will try on clothes and shoes when back-to-school shopping, experts say it is important to try on backpacks, too.

FROM THE EXPERT. "A child wearing a backpack incorrectly or that is too heavy can be contributing risk factors for discomfort, fatigue, muscle soreness, and musculoskeletal pain especially in the lower back," says Karen Jacobs, EdD, OTR/L, CPE, clinical professor of occupational therapy at Boston University, and an expert on school ergonomics and healthy growth and development of school-age children.



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