**Aching back and shoulders...weakened muscles...tingling arms...stooped posture?**

**Pack it Light! Wear it Right!**

Does your child have these symptoms after wearing a heavy school backpack? Carrying too much weight in a pack or wearing it the wrong way can lead to pain and strain. Parents can take steps to help children choose, load, and wear backpacks the right way to avoid health problems.

2. Pack It

When helping your child pack his/her backpack consider these guidelines:

* Never let a child carry more than 10% of his or her body weight. This means a child who weighs 100 pounds shouldn’t wear a loaded school backpack  heavier than 10 pounds.
* Load heaviest items closest to the child’s back (the back of the pack).
* Arrange books and materials so they won’t slide around in the backpack.
* Check what your child carries to school and brings home. Make sure the items are necessary to the day’s activities.
* On days the backpack is too loaded, your child can hand carry a book or other item.
* If the backpack is too heavy, consider using a book bag on wheels if your child’s school allows it.

1. Pick It

When purchasing a backpack

follow these tips:

* Make sure the pack is proportionate to the child’s size – the top should sit above the neck and it should not be wider than the shoulders
* Look for reflective material for visibility
* Ensure that straps are wide, padded, and rest comfortably on the shoulders
* Choose a pack with chest and hip straps as well as several compartments (preferably on the sides)
* School backpacks come in different sizes for different ages. Choose the right size pack for your child’s back as well as one with enough room for necessary school items.



For more information: http://blogs.bu.edu/kjacobs/backpacks/

3. Wear It

* Both shoulder straps should always be worn. Wearing a pack slung over one shoulder can cause a child to lean to one side, curving the spine and causing pain or discomfort.
* Adjust the shoulder straps so that the pack fits snugly to the child’s back. A pack that hangs loosely from the back 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 pack should rest in the curve of the lower back. It should never rest more than four inches below the child’s waistline.