



Backpacks are a practical way for students to carry schoolbooks and supplies. They are designed to distribute the weight of the contents among some of the body's strongest muscles; therefore, when used correctly, backpacks can be a beneficial way to carry the materials needed for school. In recent years, the weight of student backpacks has become a public health concern. Recommendations coming out of recent studies on backpack safety encourage students, parents, and staff to become informed. Collaboration between the school and the home is needed to help students develop the necessary skills, knowledge, and attitudes regarding backpack safety.

## LOADING A PACK

- A child's backpack should weigh no more than about 15% of his or her body weight.
- Load heaviest items closest to the child's back (the back of the pack).
- Arrange books and materials so they won't slide around the backpack.
- Check what your child carries to school and brings home. Make sure the items are necessary for the day's activities.
- If the backpack is too heavy or tightly packed, your child can hand carry a book or other item outside the pack.

## WEARING A PACK

- Distribute weight evenly by using both straps. Wearing a pack slung over one shoulder can cause a child to lean to one side, curving the spine and causing pain or discomfort.
- Select a pack with well-padded shoulder straps. Shoulders and necks have many blood vessels and nerves that can cause pain and tingling in the neck, arms and hands when too much pressure is applied.
- Adjust the shoulder straps so that the pack fits snugly on 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 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.
- 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.

## SOLUTIONS

- Parents may purchase an extra copy of any classroom book to keep at home. These are easily found on Amazon, or directly from the publisher.
- Make sure your child brings home only the books they need. Every book is not needed every night.
- MS and HS students may visit lockers in between classes to retrieve needed books and avoid carrying too many books around during the day.