

Backpack Safety

Choose the Right Backpack:

- **Wide, padded shoulder straps** — Narrow straps can dig into shoulders. This can cause pain and restrict circulation.
- **Two shoulder straps** — Backpacks with one shoulder strap that runs across the body cannot distribute weight evenly.
- **Padded back** — A padded back protects against sharp edges on objects inside the pack and increases comfort.
- **Waist strap** — A waist strap can distribute the weight of a heavy load more evenly.
- **Lightweight backpack** — The backpack itself should not add much weight to the load.
- **The correct size** — not wider or longer than the torso. It should never hang more than 4 inches below the torso.



To prevent injury when using a backpack, do the following:

- **Always use both shoulder straps.** Slings a backpack over one shoulder can strain muscles and may increase curvature of the spine.
- **Tighten the straps** so that the pack is close to the body. The straps should hold the pack two inches above the waist.
- **Pack light.** The backpack should never weigh more than 10 percent of the student's total body weight.
- **Organize the backpack to use all of its compartments.** Pack heavier items closest to the center of the back.
- **Stop often at school lockers**, if possible. Do not carry all of the books needed for the day.
- **Bend using both knees**, when you bend down. Do not bend over at the waist when wearing or lifting a heavy backpack.

Information from www.healthychildren.org.