



## Backpack Safety Tips

### **Wear Both Straps**

Use of 1 strap causes one side of the body to bear the weight of the backpack. By wearing 2 (both) shoulder straps, the weight of the backpack is more evenly distributed.

### **Position the backpack over the strongest mid-back muscles**

- The backpack should rest evenly in the middle of the midback.
- Shoulder straps should be loose enough to put on and take off the backpack without difficulty, and allow free movement of the arms. But the straps should not be so loose that the backpack extends below the low back, or rest on the buttocks.
- Use the chest and waist straps for additional support.
- Ideally, the back of the backpack should be padded, and if there are compression straps, they should be used to bring contents of the backpack closer to the spine.

### **Lighten the load**

- Keep the load at 10%-15% or less of the child's body weight.
- Children come in all shapes and sizes. So do backpacks. Pick a backpack that is the correct size for your child.
- Carry only those items that are required for the day. Some students have 2 sets of books, so as not to have to carry the heavy books to and from school. Reassess and repack each day, so that unnecessary items do not remain in the backpack.
- Keep the backpack load evenly distributed. Organize the contents by placing the heaviest items closest to the back.

## HOW A PHYSICAL THERAPIST CAN HELP

Consult a physical therapist if your child complains of neck, shoulder, or back pain that you think might be related to an ill-fitting backpack.

Some children have physical limitations that might require special adaptations. A physical therapist can help determine the best fit to help avoid further injury or pain.