



September 17th is National School Backpack Awareness Day

The American Occupational Therapy Association has been trying to make schools, parents and kids safer by reminding them about some safety factors in the use of backpacks.

The following symptoms may indicate a backpack is too heavy or not worn correctly:

- aching back or shoulders
- weakened muscles in the arms and hands
- tingling in neck, arms or hands
- stooped posture

For safety a backpack should:

- not weigh more than 15% of your child's weight (which would mean a child who weighs 50 lbs. should not be carrying more than 7.5 lbs. and a child who is 100 lbs. should not be carrying more than 15 lbs.)
- be loaded efficiently with heaviest items closest to the back of the back pack (closest to child's back). Organized for least amount of sliding of items.
- be checked to make sure all items are necessary to bring to school/home each day.
- be worn utilizing both straps to prevent slouching to one side and for even distribution of weight on back. If there is a waist band it should be worn.
- have straps adjusted so it is not too tight around neck and shoulders or too loose that it hangs below the hips.

If a backpack is too heavy, perhaps your student can hand carry one book. Another option would be a pack that has wheels.

National Backpack Awareness day grew out of concern over long term health factors. In 2001 the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission estimated that more than 7,000 emergency visits were made due to backpack/book bag related injuries. Half occurred in children age 5-14. For more information visit www.aota.org.

Let's keep our kids safe and healthy!

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