

BACKPACK SAFETY

Kidshealth.org

Backpacks come in all sizes, colours, fabrics, and shapes and help kids of all ages express their own personal sense of style. And when used properly, they're incredibly handy. Compared with shoulder bags, messenger bags, or purses, backpacks are better because the strongest muscles in the body - the back and the abdominal muscles - support the weight of the packs.

When worn correctly, the weight in a backpack is evenly distributed across the body, and shoulder and neck injuries are less common than if someone carried a briefcase or purse.

As practical as backpacks are, though, they can strain muscles and joints and may cause back pain if they're too heavy or are used incorrectly. Here's how to help kids find the right backpack.

Although many factors can lead to back pain - increased participation in sports or exercise, poor posture while sitting, and long periods of inactivity - some kids have backaches because they're lugging around their entire locker's worth of books, school supplies, and assorted personal items all day long. Most doctors and physical therapists recommend that kids carry no more than 10% to 15% of their body weight in their packs.

When a heavy weight, such as a backpack filled with books, is incorrectly placed on the shoulders, the weight's force can pull a child backward. To compensate, a child may bend forward at the hips or arch the back, which can cause the spine to compress unnaturally. The heavy weight might cause some kids to develop shoulder, neck, and back pain.

Read entire article: <http://kidshealth.org/parent/positive/learning/backpack.html>