

JERSEY CENTRAL

PHYSICAL THERAPY FITNESS

Physical Therapy and Back Packs

How heavy is your child's backpack? Is he/she wearing it the wrong way? Don't take this lightly. If so, this can cause pain and strain in the back and can affect your child into adulthood!

Every day, children can lug up to 20% of their body weight in their backpacks (10, 20, and even 90 lbs depending on their age and number of books). We urge parents and their students to keep backpack safety on the top of their lists.

The US Department of Health and Human Resources states that about 6,000 children per year in the United States will experience backpack-related injuries.

Why should this concern us? There's a correlation between the loads our children carry and symptoms of an unhealthy spine-including low back pain, shoulder pain and neck pain.

The Harsh Truth About Backpacks:

Heavy backpacks have a destructive impact on the posture and spinal health. Carrying too much weight contributes to poor disc alignment and disc compression. In addition, muscle fatigue and shoulder or back strain set in. More than half of the children wear backpacks incorrectly.

Heavy loads cause injuries that last a lifetime. Injuries to shoulders, neck, and back may cause recurring pain and ailments later in the life of your child.

The American Academy of Orthopedics states that backpack injuries is a significant problem for children. There is a significant amount of individuals complaining about back or shoulder pain.

Here are some ways to keep your child injury-free:

When choosing the right backpack for your child, look for one that:

- A light weight backpack, no more than 10-15% of a child's body weight
- Make sure it fits the body comfortably
- It doesn't extend above the shoulders when seated
- It has broad, well padded, and adjustable shoulder straps
- The straps attach to the top of the backpack at several points
- It has a waist strap to keep the load in place when moving
- It has separate compartments to allow heavy backpacks to be packed close to the body
- It is padded where it touches the back, and made of firm material to prevent the load from sagging backwards
- Place the heaviest books to the back as they require the most body support
- Do not carry the backpack on one shoulder- too much strain on the upper back
- Make sure the backpack is not carried for too long- put the bag down when standing for a while



In addition to these precautions, it's best to get your child evaluated for risk of low back pain and spinal injuries. **Schedule a check-up for your child with our physical therapists- we can determine and suggest actions such as flexibility and muscle control to help maximize the health of their spine.**

Remember, the health of your child is in your hands. We are here to help keep you and your family healthy. Call us today to schedule an appointment.

PLEASE CONTACT US FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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