

10 Backpack Safety Tips

Whether your child is in elementary school, middle school or high school, he or she may be at risk of injury if certain precautions are not taken when using a backpack. The 10 tips below are provided to help you keep your child injury-free.

1. **Ensure the backpack comes with wide, padded shoulder straps.** Backpacks are no longer just about utility. Backpacks today are also considered apparel. In keeping with fashion expectations some backpack straps are thin and unpadded. Avoid these backpacks for everyday school use as they can hurt and damage skin.
2. **Ensure the backpack comes with a padded back.** Books and other contents have sharp and/or hard edges. A padded back protects against pain associated with continuous contact against hard edges.
3. **Pack light, with the backpack weighing no more than 10% – 20% of body weight.** Medical professionals advise against packing more than 20% of the child's bodyweight to avoid strain on the back.
4. **Organize the contents with the heaviest items closest to the back.** Contents should be arranged to ensure that the heaviest items are placed closest to the back. This keeps the weight from pulling the child backwards and prevents back strain.
5. **Use both straps.** While hanging the backpack on only one shoulder may be convenient or look "cool," it can cause back pain as the spine is forced to cope with uneven distribution of weight.
6. **Keep the straps snug.** Snug straps keep the load of the backpack close to the back and reduce backward pull against the body.
7. **Pick up backpack bending both knees.** Any time something is being lifted, regardless of weight, proper form is essential. Both knees should be bent when picking up a backpack to prevent strain on the back.
8. **Ensure bottom of backpack rests in the curve of the lower back when being worn.** The back and shoulders should carry the load. The higher position reduces strain.
9. **If the weight exceeds 20% carry an item in hand to reduce weight in backpack.** When possible carry an item outside the backpack in order to keep the contents lighter.
10. **Keep pens, pencils and other sharp objects in hard plastic cases to prevent them from poking through backpack and harming your child.** Sharp items roaming loose may harm your child or someone brushing up against the backpack.



One backpack. Endless possibilities!

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