

What's all the
fuss about

Backpacks?



Carrying a
heavy backpack
is a
health hazard!



Reduce the backpack blues!

WHAT CAN SCHOOLS DO?

the backpack

Choose a backpack made of firm material to avoid sagging, with well padded shoulder straps and a waist belt. A waist belt allows the weight to be distributed and the backpack to be stabilised. Backpacks should be available in a variety of sizes to allow for correct fitting.



lockers

Provide lockers with space to hold a backpack or provide hooks where backpacks can be hung. (Backpacks left on the floor or in hallways are a trip hazard!)

Allow time for students to access their locker between classes.

help
students
to lighten
the load

Choose textbooks with CD ROMS so that textbooks can be left at school.

Coordinate homework requirements between teachers to avoid students carrying lots of books.

Avoid students carrying laptops to and from school as they add on average 3kg to the pack and are a security risk for students. Use external memory devices e.g. memory sticks.

Review your policy on wearing sports clothes to school. Extra clothes mean extra weight!

Students may be doing permanent damage to their neck, shoulders, and back. Experts* suggest that the weight of the backpack should not be more than 10 -15% of their body weight. For example if the student weighs 40kgs the backpack should weigh no more than 6kgs.

*Grimmer et al (1999) **High school students and backpacks - A cross sectional study**. Adelaide: Centre for Allied Health Research, University of South Australia.
Chansirinukor et al (2001) **Effects of backpacks on students: Measurement of cervical and shoulder posture**. Australian Journal of Physiotherapy Vol 47 P110-116
Negri et al (1999) **Backpack as a daily load for schoolchildren**. The Lancet, Vol 354 p1974

please turn over

WHAT CAN PARENTS DO?



Choose the right size backpack for your child's back. When your child sits down with the backpack on, it should not extend above their shoulders.

Ask what they need to take to school each day and check the weight of your child's backpack on a daily basis.

Encourage your child to wear their backpack correctly over both shoulders with the waist belt done up. The bottom of the pack should rest in the curve of the lower back. It should never rest more than 10cm below the waist.



WHAT CAN STUDENTS DO?



- Plan your day and only take to school what you need for the day.
- Pack your backpack so heavy items are close to your back. Arrange books and materials so they won't slide around.
- Wear your backpack over both shoulders and do up the waist strap.
- Use your locker to store your gear during the day and carry only what you need to each class.

Keep your back healthy and it will last you a lifetime!

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