



## BACKPACK SAFETY

### 4 STEPS

- Choose Right
- Pack Light
- Lift Right
- Wear It Right

#### TIPS FOR STUDENTS & PARENTS ON

# BACKPACK SAFETY

Follow these steps to prevent potential back, neck and shoulder problems.

### • STEP 1: Choose Right

**Size & Weight:** Choose the right size pack for your child's back. The backpack itself should be sturdy, durable, and light weight.

**Two Wide, Padded Shoulder Straps:** Narrow straps can dig into shoulders. This can cause pain and restrict circulation. Backpacks with one shoulder strap that runs across the body cannot distribute weight evenly.

**Padded Back:** A padded back protects against sharp edges on objects inside the pack and increases comfort.

**Waist Strap:** A waist strap can distribute the weight of a heavy load more evenly.

**Compression Straps:** Compression straps on the sides or bottom of the pack can help compress and stabilize contents.

**Rolling Backpack:** This type of book bag on wheels may be a good choice for students who must tote a heavy load. Remember that rolling backpacks still must be carried up stairs. They may be difficult to roll in snow.

### • STEP 2: Pack Light

**Do Not Over Pack!:** The weight of the backpack should not exceed 10 to 15% of the child's body weight. The 10% ratio is a good guideline for elementary school children, and the 15% range can be used for junior and senior high school students. For example, a 27 kg (60 lb) grade 1 student should carry no more than 2.5 kg (6 lbs); a 55 kg (120 lb) high school student should carry no more than 8kg (18 lbs). Keep it simple. Pack only the items that are absolutely needed.

**Heavier Items:** Pack heaviest items closest to the child's back.

### • STEP 3: Lift Right

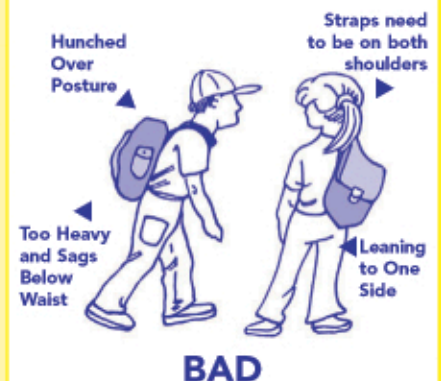
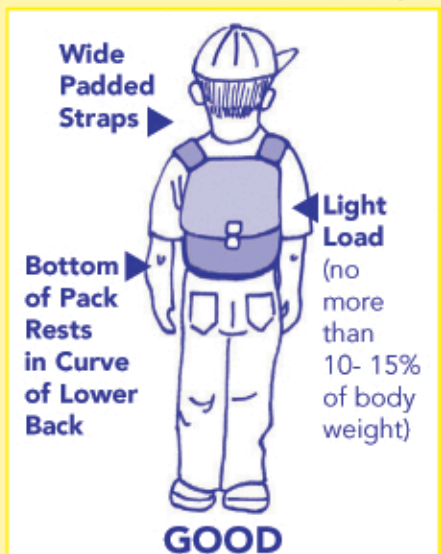
**Bend At The Knees:** Use your larger leg muscles when you lift to prevent back strain. Use both hands to lift the backpack. Do not bend at the waist when lifting or wearing a backpack.

### • STEP 4: Wear It Right

**Position The Backpack:** The bottom of the backpack should rest in the curve of the lower back. It should never rest below the child's waistline.

**Adjust The Straps & Buckles:** Both shoulder straps should always be worn. Straps should fit snug, but not too tight.

**Fasten The Waist Belt:** This will help stabilize the load and prevent shifting.



Materials Prepared by the Physiotherapists at:

- Peterborough Physiotherapy and Sports Injuries Clinic (705) 741-2284
- Chemong Physiotherapy (705) 292-9888
- Lindsay Physiotherapy (705) 324-8512
- Lindsay Rehab Health Centre (705) 324-0404