

# BACKPACKS SHOULDN'T MEAN BACK PAIN: 5 TIPS TO AVOID BACK STRAIN WHILE WEARING YOUR BACKPACK

1

## TWO SHOULDERS

Look for a backpack with two adjustable straps, one for each shoulder. Double straps help distribute the backpack weight evenly across your back. Adjustable straps can accommodate varying thickness of clothing, important for cooler weather when you are wearing a coat.

2

## BALANCE THE LOAD

Find a backpack that has a waist or chest strap. These help to balance the backpack's weight by keeping it in place while you move. Preventing side to side movement will make the load you carry more stable.

3

## LIGHTEN THE LOAD

Base the amount of weight you can carry in your backpack on your personal weight. Children should not carry more than 10% to 20% of their body weight. Older adolescents and adults should not carry more than 10% of your body weight. Most kids carry more than this, and that can cause problems. The weight can pull a child backward, making them bend forward at the hips or arch the back to stay steady. This prolonged unnatural position can lead to shoulder, neck, and back pain.

4

## BEND AT THE KNEES

You don't want to strain your back by bending at the waist to pick it up. Instead, bend at your knees and use your legs to lift the backpack and wear the shoulder and waist or chest strap.

5

## WEAR IT WELL

Make sure the backpack sits properly on your back. The best placement for your backpack is 2 inches above your waist. The lower it hangs below the waist, the greater weight the shoulders must carry which strains the muscles supporting your neck.



**If your child has back pain or numbness or weakness in the arms or legs, talk to the doctor.**