

Sherman County Health Department

Choosing the Right Back Pack

Backpacks come in all sizes, colors, fabrics, and shapes and help kids of all ages express their own personal sense of style. And when used properly, they're incredibly handy.

Many backpacks come with multiple compartments that help students stay organized while they tote their books and papers from home to school and back again. Compared with shoulder bags, messenger bags, or purses, backpacks are better because strong muscles — the back and the abdominal muscles — support the weight of the packs.

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As practical as backpacks are, though, they can strain muscles and joints and may cause back pain if they're too heavy or are used incorrectly.

Here's how to help kids find — and use — the right backpack.

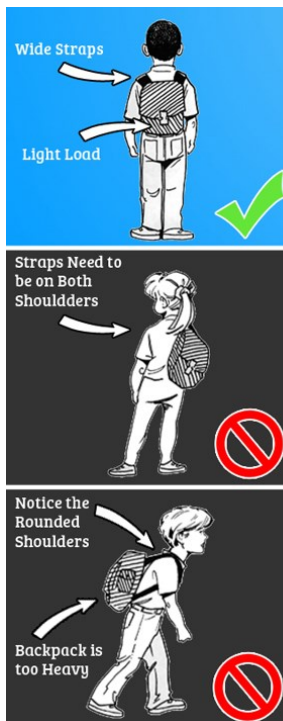
Doctors and physical therapists recommend that kids carry no more than 10% to 15% of their body weight in their packs. But many carry a lot more than that. When a heavy backpack is incorrectly placed on the shoulders, the weight's force can pull a child backward. To compensate, the child might bend forward at the hips or arch the back. This can make the spine compress unnaturally, leading to shoulder, neck, and back pain.

Get Smart! Check the Chart:

If you're hauling more than 15% of your body weight (10% for younger kids), lighten up. Now!

If you weigh.....only carry

23 kg/50 lbs	2.2 kg/5 lbs
32 kg/70 lbs	3 kg/7 lbs
40 kg/90 lbs	6 kg/14 lbs
50 kg/110 lbs	7 kg/16 lbs
59 kg/130 lbs	9 kg/19 lbs
68 kg/150 lbs	10 kg/22 lbs
77 kg/170 lbs	11 kg/25 lbs
86 kg/190 lbs	13 kg/28 lbs



Backpacks Without Back Pain

Tips from the American Chiropractic Association

- Make sure your child's backpack weighs no more than **5 to 10 percent** of their body weight.
- Your child's backpack should never hang more than **four inches below** the waistline.
- Purchase backpacks with individualized compartments - this helps to position the contents **more effectively**.
- Purchase **small to medium** sized backpacks - The more room there is in a backpack, the more your child will carry.
- Urge your child to wear **both shoulder straps**.
- Purchase backpacks with **wide, padded straps**.
- Purchase backpacks with **adjustable straps** so the backpack can be fitted to your child's body.
- If the backpack is still **too heavy**, talk to your child's teacher. Ask if your child could leave the **heaviest books** at school.

