



## Some pointers for choosing a School Backpack

The American Academy of Paediatrics (AAP) recommends that parents look for the following when **choosing the right backpack**:

**A lightweight pack** that doesn't add a lot of weight to your child's load

**Two wide, padded shoulder straps**; straps that are too narrow can dig into shoulders

**A padded back**, which not only provides increased comfort, but also protects children from being poked by sharp edges on objects (pencils, rulers, notebooks, etc.) inside the pack

**A waist belt**, which helps to distribute the weight more evenly across the body

**Multiple compartments**, which can help distribute the weight more evenly

**Consider a rolling backpack.** This type of backpack may be a good choice for students who must carry a heavy load. Remember that rolling backpacks still must be carried up stairs. Check with the school before buying a rolling pack; many schools don't allow them because they can pose a tripping hazard in the hallways.

## Using Backpacks Wisely

To help children prevent injury when using a backpack:

**Lighten the load.** No matter how well-designed the backpack, doctors and physical therapists recommend that children carry packs of no more than 10% to 15% of their body weight — but less is always better.

**Use and pick up the backpack properly.** Make sure children use both shoulder straps. Bags that are slung over the shoulder or across the chest — or that only have one strap — aren't as effective at distributing the weight as bags with two wide shoulder straps, and therefore may strain muscles. Also tighten the straps enough for the backpack to fit closely to the body. The pack should rest evenly in the middle of the back and not sag down to the buttocks.



## **What Children Can Do**

A lot of the responsibility for packing lightly — and safely — rests with the children:

**Encourage children to use their locker or desk** frequently throughout the day instead of carrying the entire day's worth of books in the backpack.

**Make sure children do not carry unnecessary items** — laptops, video games etc. can add extra pounds to a pack.

**Encourage children to bring home only the books needed** for homework or studying each night. Ask about homework planning. A heavier pack on Fridays might mean that a child is procrastinating on homework until the weekend, making for an unnecessarily heavy backpack.

**Picking up the backpack the right way** can also help children avoid back injuries. As with any heavy weight, they should bend at the knees and grab the pack with both hands when lifting a backpack to the shoulders.

**Use all of the backpack's compartments**, putting heavier items, such as textbooks, closest to the centre of the back.