

Facts:

-Recent research reports that a majority of today's students are carrying more than the recommended weight levels and sustaining significant injuries that may last a lifetime (COCSA Feb. 22, 2003).

-The Consumer Product Safety Commission estimates an increase of backpack related injuries of 330% since 1996 (I.C.P.A. Newsletter, July August 2002).

-National Public Radio reported that 65% of adolescents' visits to doctors are for backpack related injuries (October 1998).

-Of the more than 1,100 backpack users between the ages of 12 and 18 surveyed for the study, nearly 75% were classified as having back pain (I.C.P.A. Newsletter 2).

-The amount of weight carried by children in their backpacks is an important factor and deserves serious attention (I.C.P.A.

Newsletter, July August 2002).

Pack Requirements:

-Make sure backpack is sturdy and appropriately sized.

-Look for padded straps that are at least 2 inches wide to avoid pressure on the nerves around the shoulders and armpits.

-Some backpacks have a waist strap designed to help stabilize the load. These should be used whenever possible (I.C.P.A. Newsletter, July

Weight Recommendations:

Medical professionals advise that individuals carry no more than 10-15% of their body weight on their backs. For example, a child weighing

| <u>User</u> | <u>Backpack</u> |
|-------------|------------------------|
| 50 lbs. | No more than 7.5 lbs. |
| 80 lbs. | No more than 12 lbs. |
| 100 lbs. | No more than 15 lbs. |
| 130 lbs. | No more than 19.5 lbs. |

-Many children, teens, and adults are carrying up to 40 lbs. and are potentially injuring themselves.

-Heavy packs can cause a child to

hyperextend, or arch, his or her back, or lean the head and trunk forward to compensate for the weight of the bag. These postures can stress the muscles in the neck and back increasing the risk of injury and fatigue. The natural curves in the middle and lower back can become distorted, which can cause irritation to the spinal joints and the rib cage. A rounding of the shoulders could also result if the back has to compensate for a heavy load (I.C.P.A Newsletter 2).

Fitting Guidelines:

-Choose a pack that fits your child's back. A backpack that is too large will sag towards the buttocks, stressing the child's upper back and shoulders.

-The width should not be greater than that of the child's torso. (I.C.P.A. Newsletter, July August 2002).

-Keeping a backpack close to the hips shifts the work to the legs. Hold the bottom of your child's backpack two inches above the waist, and keep the top of the pack just below the base of the skull (I.C.P.A. Newsletter 2).

Precautions:

When packing your child's backpack, place heaviest objects first so that they are carried lower and closer to the body (I.C.P.A Newsletter 2).

-Prioritizing the pack's contents is very important.

Lifting and Wearing

Follow proper lifting technique:

-Face the backpack before you lift it and check the weight of the pack using both hands.

-Lift with your legs, not your back.

-Carefully put one shoulder strap on at a time. Never swing the pack onto the shoulder.

-Use both shoulder straps. Make them snug, but not too tight. Use the stabilizing waist strap if available.

-Look for signs indicating poor fitting or overloading such as pain, red marks from straps, and/or poor

posture.

Roller Bags

An empty roller bag can weigh up to 80% more than an empty backpack. With a roller bag, there is a tendency to add more things which can end up in having a heavier pack.

-Keep in mind that your child will still have to carry the roller bag up and down stairs.

-Roller bags may be difficult to use in snow.

-Check with your child's school on

If you find that your child is struggling, has back pain, has to lean forward to carry his/her bag, or has numbness in the arms and legs, it is important to lighten the load and speak with your child's doctor.

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Backpack Safety



What's wrong with this picture?