

Take the back pain out of backpacks

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(HealthDay)—Backpacks can mean backaches for schoolchildren, but an orthopedic surgeon has advice for parents and kids about how to keep soreness at bay.

"Parents should inspect their [child's](#) backpack from time to time," said Dr. Joshua Hyman of New York-Presbyterian Morgan Stanley Children's Hospital in New York City.

Kids "often carry much more than they should, with extra shoes, toys, [electronic devices](#) and other unnecessary items," he explained in a hospital news release.

Hyman suggests that before sending kids off to school, parents should follow these backpack safety tips:

- **Be a weight-watcher.** According to Hyman, backpacks shouldn't weigh more than 15 percent of a kid's [body weight](#). That's the equivalent of 7 pounds for a 50-pound child.
- **Lighten the load.** If you feel that your child is weighed down by too many textbooks, talk to the teacher about whether any can be left at school. If not, a backpack on wheels may be an option.
- **Two straps are better than one.** Encourage your child to wear the straps over both shoulders—not over one shoulder—so the weight of the bag is distributed evenly.
- **Size matters.** Get a correctly sized backpack that's not wider or longer than your child's torso, and make sure it doesn't hang more than 4 inches below your kid's waist. A low-hanging backpack could force your child to lean forward while walking.
- **The more padding the better.** Look for a backpack with straps that are wide and padded to prevent them from digging into the child's shoulders. Also, look for one with a padded back. This can reduce the risk that your child will be hurt by sharp objects inside the backpack.
- **Watch for signs of trouble.** Be on the lookout for pain, posture changes, tingling or red marks due to [backpack](#) use. If your child's pain is persistent, talk to your pediatrician.

More information: The American Academy of Pediatrics has more about [backpack safety](#).

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