

British Columbia  
Chiropractic  
Association

Pack it Light.  
Wear it Right.

Backpack Safety Program



# Did you know?

- 80% of Canadians will experience back pain at some point in their lifetime.
- 1/3 of all medical office visits are for spine and spine-related conditions.
- More than 50% of Canadian youth will experience at least one back pain episode by their late teens
- Carrying a heavy backpack is a spinal hazard, and over time, may lead to altered posture and gait.

# Improper Backpack Use

- Back, shoulder or neck pain
- Walking/gait problems
- Rounded shoulders
- Poor posture
- Headaches
- Nerve damage



# Choose the Right Backpack

- Lightweight materials such as vinyl and canvas;
- Two adjustable straps, at least two inches wide;
- Messenger bag styles are not ideal;
- Look for a bag with lots of pockets;
- Top of the bag should not extend higher than the shoulder when worn;
- Bottom of the bag should not fall below the top of the hipbone when worn;
- Hip straps and waist belts are helpful.



# Pack it Light.



- Only carry what you need for the day;
- Evenly distribute weight throughout the pockets and compartments;
- Pack heavy items closest to your body;
- Total weight of the packed bag should not exceed 10-15% of your body weight

# Weight Chart

Don't carry more than 15% of your body weight in your backpack. This should be reduced to 10% of body weight for kids in grades K to 8.

Your Weight	Maximum Load
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

# How Much Does it Weigh?

Backpack weight can add up quick. Here is a sample of how much common items can weigh. What's the easiest way to figure out how much you can carry? Fill your backpack and stick it on a scale. Take out items until the backpack no longer exceeds 'ideal' weight for you.

Item	Weight (approx.)
6 text books	2.7 kg / 6 lbs
Water bottle	0.25 kg/ 0.5 lbs
Tablet	0.75 kg/ 1.5 lbs
Lunch/snacks	1 kg / 2 lbs
Laptop	2.7 kg / 6 lbs
2 binders	1.5 kg / 3 lbs
Gym shoes	1 kg / 2 lbs

# Wear it Right.



- If possible, put your backpack on a flat, waist high surface. Slip on the straps one shoulder at a time.
- Make sure shoulder straps are adjusted properly so that the bag fits snugly. Ask a parent or teacher for help.



# Wear it Right.

- Straighten up! Use both shoulder straps and avoid leaning postures.
- Don't hunch over. If your backpack is too heavy, lighten the load.



# Remember...

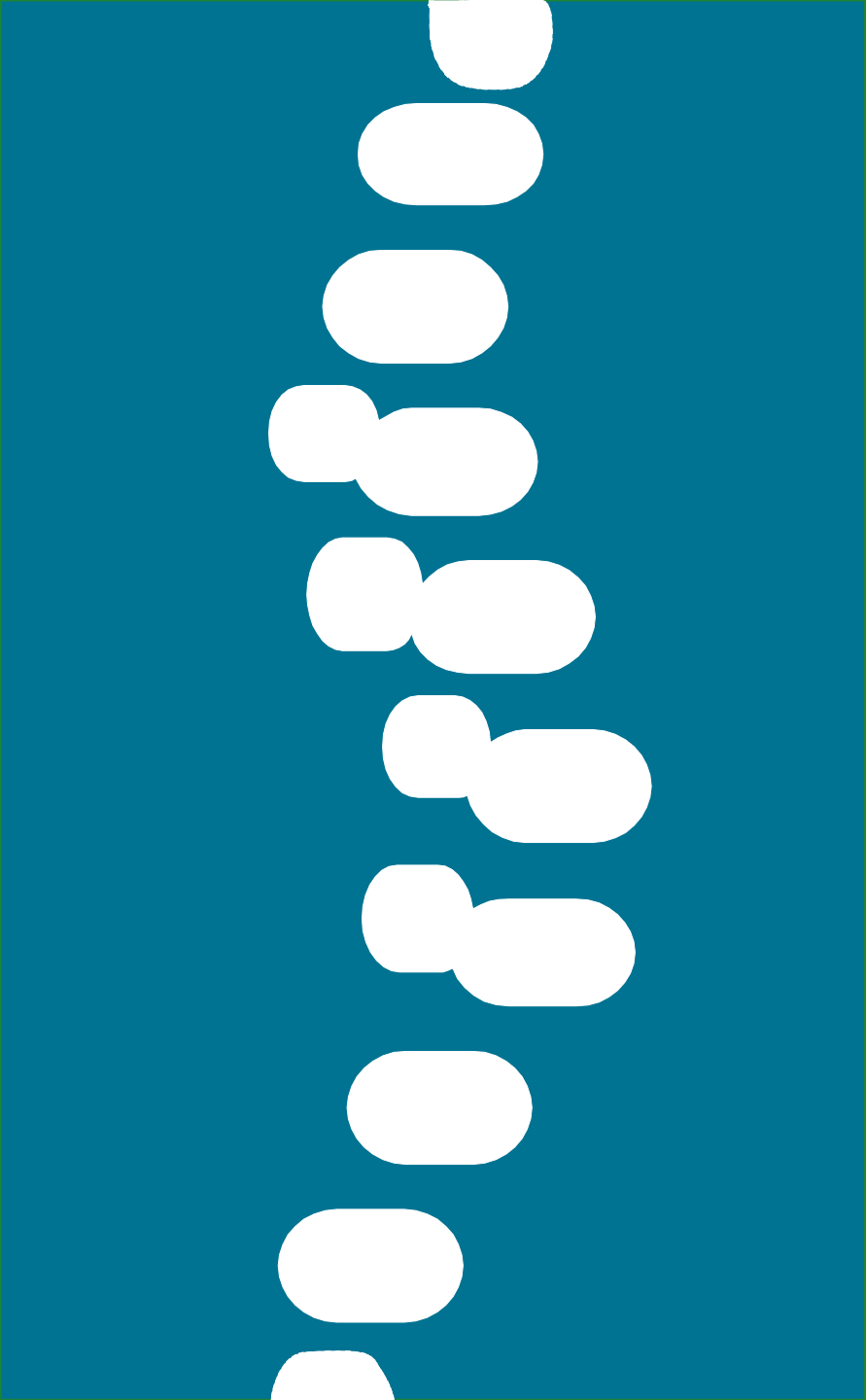
- Back pain is not usually due to growing pains.
- If your back, neck or shoulders hurt, talk to your parents.



# 10 Tips for a Healthy Back



1. Exercise regularly.
2. Follow a healthy diet.
3. Maintain good posture.
4. Warm up and cool down before and after physical activity.
5. Don't overload your backpack or shoulder bag.
6. Stretch your legs and back after each hour of sitting.
7. Never cradle the phone between your neck and shoulder.
8. Sleep on your back or side, not on your stomach.
9. Invest in a good chair, pillow, and mattress.
10. Have regular spinal check ups.



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