****

**Is your child backpack savvy?**

We often see school kids at this time of year with pain and postural issues due to incorrect use of backpacks. We all see a vast array of backpack use mostly hanging on one side, rather than on backs. It seems the word *back*-pack has lost its true meaning!

Although this digital era has reduced the weight of backpacks, incorrect use of a bag still puts unnecessary strain on backs and necks, resulting in pain and poor posture.

The Australian Physiotherapy Association recommends that children’s backpacks should weigh no more than 10% of the child’s bodyweight. This means that for a 13 year old girl weighing 45kg, the ***maximum*** weight her backpack should be is 4.5kg.

Obviously, back pain can result from a number of other factors, such as extended periods of inactivity, poor sitting posture and other conditions. A heavy bag can result in unnecessary and unaccustomed weight being placed on a developing child’s spine.

The following recommendations can reduce back pack induced issues:

* Ensure the bag does not sit lower than 10cm below your child’s waistline.
* Make sure your child’s bag weighs no more than 10% of his/her bodyweight.
* The backpack should be as close as possible to your child’s back, rather than near their bottom.
* Children should try to stand straight whilst carrying a bag, rather than leaning forwards to backwards.
* Always use both straps and avoid carrying a bag on one shoulder.
* Avoid unnecessarily carrying heavy books to/from school.
* If catching public transport, children and teenagers should place their bag on the floor.

Take a few minutes to check your child’s back-pack now and have a healthy 2016 school year.

Dóra Kónya

Paediatric Physiotherapist

B (Physio), M(Physio)

Member of the Australian Physiotherapy Association National Paediatric Group

**Useful websites:**

Australian Physiotherapy Association

<https://www.physiotherapy.asn.au/APAWCM/The_APA/news/2014/December/Don%E2%80%99t_break_the_back_going_back_to_school.aspx>

Better Health Channel

[http://www3.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcpdf.nsf/ByPDF/Back\_pain\_schoolbags/$File/Back\_pain\_schoolbags.pdf](http://www3.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcpdf.nsf/ByPDF/Back_pain_schoolbags/%24File/Back_pain_schoolbags.pdf)

Choice

<https://www.choice.com.au/babies-and-kids/education-and-childcare/education/buying-guides/school-backpacks>

Spartan – School Supply Specialist (Endorsed by the Australian Physiotherapy Association).

<http://www.spartanss.com.au/physiopak-videos/w1/i1168276/>