



# backpack safety

## tips for safe backpack use and injury prevention

### Choosing a Backpack

- The most important step to backpack safety is choosing the right size backpack.
- Try on a backpack prior to purchase
- Have a parent or friend to help you pick one out. A second set of eyes from different angles is very important
- Padded straps are important. Padded shoulder straps will help distribute the weight across a larger area of the chest and shoulders and will make wearing the pack significantly more comfortable
- Some backpacks have sternum and hip straps that help to further redistribute weight and bring the pack closer to the body. This reduces swinging of the backpack that can cause strains. Sternum straps connect the two shoulder straps and hip straps come from the base of the backpack and wrap around the child's hips and clip together just below the navel.

### Packing Your Backpack

- The recommended weight of your backpack should be less than 15% of your body weight.
- Multiple compartments can play an important role in weight distribution while helping keep a child organized.

- Distributing the weight inside the pack is very important. The heavier items should be kept close to the body where they will be more stable. Put the heaviest items in the middle of the pack where it can rest close to the small of the back. Heavy objects placed too high in the pack may create problems with balance and result in harmful swaying of the backpack. Heavy objects at the bottom of the pack will drag down on the shoulder straps, which can cause discomfort.

### More Tips

- If the backpack causes the child to lean forward or backwards it is too heavy
- Always use both shoulder straps and tighten the straps snug against the back.
- If your backpack has a waist strap — use it.
- Never wear a backpack with the straps too loose and hanging or swinging on your back.
- Never wear a backpack on one shoulder, this can cause muscle imbalances and develop serious back, neck, and posture problems
- Never overload your backpack with greater than 15% of your body weight. In unavoidable situations use your backpack for less than 15% of the weight and carry the rest of the books in your arms close to your chest to help distribute the weight.