



Backpacks that are too heavy or not adjusted correctly can cause symptoms such as aching backs or shoulders, tingling arms, sore muscles, or stooped posture. You can take steps to help children load and wear backpacks the correct way to avoid health problems.

- **Size:** The height of the backpack should extend from approximately 2 inches below the shoulders to waist level, or slightly above the waist.
- **Straps:** Backpacks should have well-padded shoulder straps and worn on both shoulders to evenly distribute the weight of the contents. Shoulders and necks have many blood vessels and nerves that can cause pain and tingling in the neck, arms, and hands with too much pressure applied. A backpack with a hip and/or chest belt will take some of the strain off of the neck and shoulders.
- **Fit:** Children should try backpacks on for fit and comfort before purchasing. Adjust shoulder straps so that the backpack fits snugly on the child's back. Backpacks should be adjusted to accommodate outerwear and child's growth over the course of the school year. The bottom of the backpack should rest in the curve of the lower back and never rest more than 4 inches below the child's waistline.
- **Loading a Backpack:** Load the heaviest items closest to the child's back in the backpack. Arrange books and materials so they won't slide around. If the backpack is too heavy, encourage your child to carry an item outside of the backpack if possible.

