



Allcare Rehabilitation



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Children's Backpack Injuries

Facts:

With increasing backpack weights, students are at an increased risk for muscle strains and related injuries. Not all that long ago children's injuries due to muscle strains were almost non-existent. Due to increasingly heavier loads that children today are required to repetitively lift and carry throughout the day there has been an increase in muscle strains and related injuries. Kids will complain of tension headaches, neck, mid and lower back pain without incident. They will have increased difficulty concentrating at school as a result of the pain they are experiencing. Backpacks should weigh less than 20% of the student's body weight. Straps should fit comfortably and not cut into the students shoulders. The bottom line is that backpacks need to be lighter (the lighter the better) and children need to be more active.

Risk Factors:

Risk Factors for back pain include repetitive lifting/carrying, highly repetitive sports related activities that involve spinal rotation (for example: swinging a baseball bat), poor physical fitness, adolescent growth spurts, poor posture, and increased time spent on sedentary activities (watching television and sitting in front of a computer for extended periods of time).



HEALING IN MOTION

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We Get Results**

Tips:

- ◆ Use backpacks that fit the child appropriately. Find backpacks with wide, padded, adjustable straps and ensure the children use them correctly over both shoulders. Watch for awkward posturing.
- ◆ Adjust loads so that the heaviest items are carried as close to the center of the back as possible. This will make the burden easier to carry and will prevent sagging that can bang against the spine.
- ◆ Children should be taught how to properly lift their backpacks onto their shoulders to avoid injury. They should use their legs and not twist or stoop over excessively.
- ◆ Help children weed through papers and books to lighten the load, keeping only the items needed for each school day in the backpack.
- ◆ Consider collaborating with teachers to explore options including online books, photocopying key pages instead of toting the entire book around or using thumb drive technology to ease the transport of homework between school and home.
- ◆ Know how much your child weighs and routinely weigh their backpacks to assure it is not getting too heavy (should be less than 20% of the child's body weight).
- ◆ Improve your child's fitness level by starting them on an appropriate exercise program while decreasing television/computer time. This will help reduce fatigue and muscle strains.

