

FITZPATRICK PHYSICAL THERAPY

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Free Supervised Childcare and Extended Hours

Healthy "Back" to School

While it seems that almost every student carries a backpack during the school year, most parents and children are unaware of the potential injury that too-heavy backpacks can cause.

With school starting soon, Fitzpatrick Physical Therapy has put together advice and recommendations to help reduce the back and shoulder pain that as many as 50% of all school children experience each year.

BACKPACK INJURY FACTS

- The American Pediatric Association recommends that students carry no more than 15% of their body weight in backpacks.
- 55% of students carry more than the recommended 15% of body weight in their backpacks.
- Approximately 21,000 emergency room visits each year can be attributed to book bags.
- 60% of children's orthopedic visits for back and shoulder pain are the result of carrying too heavy a backpack.

Are Backpacks the Right Choice?

Backpacks are considered the most efficient way to carry books and other items kids need for school. Compared to satchels or briefcases, backpacks are considered safer because they distribute weight evenly across the body and are supported by the back and abdominal muscles. Children and

teens also prefer them because they are fashionable, hold more items and come with multiple compartments that help them to stay organized.

But despite their usefulness, a major study recently reported by the American Physical Therapy Association has found that more than 50% of children surveyed carry back packs that are too heavy.

Backpacks are the best option for students, but it is essential to look for the correct design features. For this reason Fitzpatrick Physical Therapy recommends:

AIRPACKS SYSTEM BACKPACKS

These revolutionary backpacks feature a patented ergonomic design that redistributes weight and reduces stress on the back by up to 80% and lightens the effective load by up to 50%.



Design Features

- Patented ergonomic air transfer system with inflatable lumbar cushion.
- Wide, foam-cushioned shoulder straps designed to adjust side-to-side.
- Sized by the wearer's height to ensure good fit and prevent overloading.
- Stylish design and cool colors with handy cell phone/mp3 player holder.

AIRPACKS BACKPACKS are available at both Fitzpatrick Physical Therapy Clinics in Placerville (1252 Broadway, Suite B) and El Dorado Hills (3955 Park Drive, Suite 1). Stop by to pick one up for your student or call to charge one over the phone and we can ship it to your home in time for the start of school. (530-622-9410 or 916-933-9439)



Dangers of an Overloaded Backpack

When a backpack is filled with heavy books and incorrectly positioned, the weight's force can pull your child backward. To compensate, your child may bend forward at the hips or arch his or her back, causing the spine to compress unnaturally. This can lead to shoulder, neck and back pain.

Wearing a backpack on one shoulder can cause your child to lean to one side to compensate for the

extra weight and can also lead to pain. Undue downward pressure is put on the top of the shoulder and then weight is then dispersed unevenly down to the hip, knee and ankle.

Girls and younger children may be especially at risk for backpack related injuries because they are smaller and often carry loads that are heavier in proportion to their body weight.

4 Steps to Safe Backpacking

1. Choose Right

- Choosing the right size backpack is the most important step. If the backpack is too large for the child or teen it will sit too low, placing undue stress on the spine and spinal muscles.
- The larger the volume of the pack, the more likely it is to be overloaded above the guidelines of less than 15% of the wearer's body weight.
- Padded shoulder straps will also improve comfort.

Tip: Airpack Backpacks can be custom-fit for your child at Fitzpatrick Physical Therapy.

2. Pack Right

- Keep backpack use to necessities only. See that your child cleans out his or her backpack daily by removing items that can be left at home or in a locker.
- Distribute weight evenly—a backpack with individualized compartments will help position the contents effectively to spread out the weight.

- Encourage your child to wear *both* shoulder straps whenever he or she carries their pack. This will help to distribute the weight evenly across the back and promote good posture.

Tip: If the backpack forces the wearer to move forward to carry, it is overloaded.

3. Lift Right

- Face the backpack, bend at the knees.
- Use both hands and check the weight of the pack.
- Lift with the legs.
- Apply one shoulder strap and then the other.

Tip: Don't sling the backpack onto one shoulder.

4. Wear Right

- Use both shoulder straps, snug but not too tight.
- Recognize signs that the backpack is too heavy, such as slouching or leaning to one side.

Tip: An Airpack backpack with adjustable lumbar cushion will ensure a custom fit.



Stop by Fitzpatrick Physical Therapy today!

Our staff is happy to custom fit your child with an Airpack Backpack for a safe and healthy "Back" to School. Two locations for your convenience:

1252 BROADWAY, PLACERVILLE
530-622-9410

3955 PARK DR., EL DORADO HILLS
916-933-9439

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