

Prevent Backpack Overloads

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission estimates that more than 7,000 emergency room visits in 2001 resulted from injuries related to backpacks and book bags, with the majority occurring among children ages 5 to 14 in elementary and middle schools. The American Occupational Therapy Association offers a few suggestions to should consider:

- A loaded backpack should weigh no more than 15% of a student's body weight.
- Both shoulder straps of a book bag should be worn for an evenly balanced load to reduce potential spine curvature.
- Load heaviest items closest to the child's back.
- Consider the total weight of each day's assigned class work not only in content, but in terms of text book or computer weight.
- Backpacks with a hip strap help transfer the weight to the hips, but rolling backpacks are the best option if your organization allows them.

A proactive approach and educating the students to the risks associated with backpack overloads can help keep students healthy and attentive in class.