



# Backpack Safety Guide

Backpacks are often an essential item for helping students carry their books and supplies to school. However, wearing a backpack improperly or carrying one that is too heavy can lead to injury. Set your child up for school year success by following safe backpack practices.

- Choose a backpack with wide, padded shoulder straps. Narrow straps can dig into shoulders, causing pain and restricting circulation. They are also less sturdy and more likely to rip after just a few weeks or months of use.
- Look for padding. The part of the back that rests on your child's back should be well padded. This adds comfort and provides protection from any sharp edges or objects inside the pack.
- Select a backpack that is lightweight, but sturdy. Look for strong zippers and tough nylon fabrics that will resist rips and tears without adding extra weight.

**St. Petersburg Office**  
625 6th Avenue South  
Suite 450  
St. Petersburg, FL 33701

**Tampa Office**  
3440 W. Dr. MLK Jr. Blvd  
Suite 200  
Tampa, FL 33607

**Sarasota Outreach:** 5881 Rand Blvd, Sarasota, FL 34238  
**Pasco Outreach:** 4443 Rowan Road, New Port Richey, FL 34653  
**East Lake Outreach:** 3850 Tampa Road, Palm Harbor, FL 34684  
**Brandon Outreach:** 885 S. Parsons Avenue, Brandon, FL 33511  
**Phone:** (727) 898-BONE (2663) or (813) 879-BONE (2663) **Fax:** (727) 568-6836 or (813) 872-0286

## Backpack Safety Continued

- Reflective fabric is good idea, especially if your child will be walking, riding their bike or going to and from the bus stop.
- Make sure your child uses both shoulder straps. Wearing a backpack on one shoulder may strain muscles. If child prefers a messenger-style bag, make sure they wear it across the body instead of on one shoulder.
- Don't overload the backpack. A filled backpack shouldn't weigh more than 10 pounds. Parents of younger students should clean out the backpack on a regular basis to see if there are unnecessary items adding to the backpack's weight. Encourage teens to clean out their backpack from time to time, too.
- Only carry items that are required for the day. Pack heavier items at the top and toward the front.
- Keep the straps tight. The bottom of the pack should fall two inches above the waist, and the pack should be relatively close to the body. Use the chest strap, if present, to take some of the load off the shoulder straps.
- Do not wear a backpack while riding in a car. In the event of an accident, doing so could cause or intensify injury.

Backpacks are designed to distribute the weight of books and supplies across some of the body's strongest muscles. However, children and teens that wear their backpack incorrectly or carry one that is too heavy are putting themselves at risk for injury. Muscles and joints may be damaged and lead to severe neck, back and shoulder pain. Do not ignore any back pain in children or teens and encourage your student to tell you about any numbness, tingling, or discomfort in the arms or legs. This may indicate a backpack that is too heavy or does not fit well.

To check if your child's backpack is too heavy, watch them put it on. If they struggle and the pack seems too heavy, remove some of the books and have your child carry them in their arms to ease the load. Encourage older students to make frequent stops at their locker during the day to drop-off or switch out heavier books.

**For more information, to schedule an appointment, or to print brochures, please visit our website:**

**[www.chortho.com](http://www.chortho.com)**

**Jeffrey B. Neustadt, M.D.**

**Gregory V. Hahn, M.D.**

**Drew E. Warnick, M.D.**

**Paul L. Benfanti, M.D.**

**Lee G. Phillips, M.D.**

**Daniel C. Bland, M.D.**

**T. Cooper Wilson, M.D.**

### **St. Petersburg Office**

625 6th Avenue South  
Suite 450  
St. Petersburg, FL 33701

### **Tampa Office**

3440 W. Dr. MLK Jr. Blvd  
Suite 200  
Tampa, FL 33607

**Sarasota Outreach:** 5881 Rand Blvd, Sarasota, FL 34238

**Pasco Outreach:** 4443 Rowan Road, New Port Richey, FL 34653

**East Lake Outreach:** 3850 Tampa Road, Palm Harbor, FL 34684

**Brandon Outreach:** 885 S. Parsons Avenue, Brandon, FL 33511

**Phone:** (727) 898-BONE (2663) or (813) 879-BONE (2663) **Fax:** (727) 568-6836 or (813) 872-0286