

### Knowing your child's backpack

- Backpacks are one of the best ways to tote homework and books, but overloaded or improperly worn backpacks can cause injury to your child's growing musculoskeletal system.
- The American Physical Therapy Association and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommend the maximum safe weight for a child's backpack should be no more than 15 percent of your child's body weight. See diagram below.

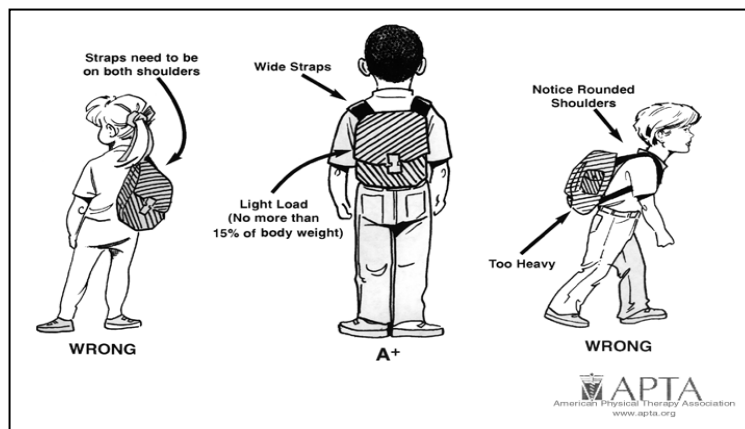
Your Child's Weight (pounds)	40	50	60	70	80	90	100	110	120	130	140	150	160	170	180	190	200
Appropriate Backpack Weight (pounds)	6	7.5	9	10.5	12	13.5	15	16.5	18	19.5	21	22.5	24	25.5	27	28.5	30

### Recommend features for a safe backpack

- Wide, padded shoulder straps will reduce pressure on your child's shoulders and chest.
- If your child's backpack is padded, it will decrease pressure on your child's back and will prevent the contents of the backpack from digging into your child's back.
- Waist belts on backpacks help distribute the load of the backpack.
- Compression straps on backpacks help compress and stabilize the content in the backpack.
- Reflective material on the backpack will make your child visible to drivers at night.
- A rolling backpack is a good choice if your child needs to carry heavy loads.

### Guidelines for safe backpack use

- Wearing both straps will allow for better weight distribution and promotes symmetrical posture.
- Proper size is very important. Your child's backpack should sit evenly in the middle of their back. It should not sag. The bottom of the backpack should rest in the contour of your child's lower back. The shoulder straps should allow for free movement of arms.
- Organization of the content of your child's backpack will make the load easier to carry. The heavier items should be placed closest to your child's back.
- Have your child make frequent stops throughout the day, loading and unloading at their lockers. Encourage them to leave non-essential items at home.



### Warning signs that your child's backpack is too heavy

- Pain,
- Tingling or numbness in the arms, and
- Red marks on the shoulders.
- Be aware of the load your child is carrying. Above all, urge your child to tell you if they are in pain or have discomfort before the problem becomes serious.

If you have questions regarding the proper fit of your child's backpack, please contact Cascade Rehabilitation for more information.