

# Prevent back & neck pain with these BACKPACK TIPS!

## What's the best way to stuff your backpack?

- Watch the weight! If you're in Grades JK-8, try to keep the weight in your pack to **below 10 per cent of your body weight. That's your "maximum load."** Older students can carry **up to 15% of their weight.** Weigh your loaded pack and compare it to your maximum load.
- Don't overload your backpack. Only carry what you need for that day or night. Spread the weight throughout your backpack.
- Pack the heaviest items closest to your body so the most weight is closer to your body's own centre of gravity.
- Pack any odd-shaped or sharp items on the outside, so they don't dig into your back.



### Lifting Your Backpack

- Squat or kneel to pick up the backpack and place it on a counter, chair or table at waist height, before slipping it on.
- Avoid twisting when lifting.
- Use both hands to check the weight of the backpack.
- Lift with your legs, bend at the knees. Put on one shoulder strap at a time and adjust straps to fit your shoulders.



### Carrying Your Backpack

- DON'T sling your backpack on one side – this can cause the spine to lean, putting stress on the joints and muscles in the mid- and lower- back.
- DO wear both straps and adjust them so that the pack fits snugly. Check the fit—you should be able to slide your hand between the backpack and your back.
- DO use the waist strap because it reduces the strain on your back and transfers some of the load to your hips.
- DON'T carry your backpack too low as this will cause you to lean forward and puts the weight on your upper back.



### Choosing A Backpack

- Choose a lightweight material.
- The pack should have padded straps and back, and the top should not extend higher than the top of your shoulder, and the bottom should not fall below the top of your hipbone.
- A hip or waist belt will help redistribute your weight away from your shoulders and spine.



# How much is too much? What should you carry?

	If you weigh		You shouldn't carry more than	
	POUNDS	KG	POUNDS	KG
<b>Elementary School Students</b>	50	22	5	2.2
No more than 10% of weight!				
	60	27	6	2.7
	70	32	7	3.0
	80	36	8	3.6
	90	41	9	4.1
	100	44	10	4.4
<b>Secondary School Students</b>	90	41	14	6.0
No more than 15% of weight!				
	100	45	15	6.8
	115	52	17	7.8
	130	59	20	9.0
	150	68	22.5	10.2
	190	86	28	13.0

## How much does your stuff weigh?

These are just averages - it's best to weigh your own stuff.

	The Essentials		The Extras		
	POUNDS	KG	POUNDS	KG	
Large textbook - each	6.0	2.7	Running shoes	2.0	0.9
Small textbook - each	2.0	0.9	20 oz. water bottle	.25	0.68
Notebook (100 pages) - each	0.75	0.35	GameBoy	0.5	0.25
Binder with paper	1.5	0.75	Lunch/snacks	2.0	1.0
Laptop computer	6.0	2.7	Wet towel	2.0	1.0
Large paperback book	1.0	0.45	Two drinks	2.0	1.0
Sports gear	10.0	4.5	10 CD's	0.5	0.25

Add up what you carry in an average day,  
figure out your maximum & see if you need  
to lighten your load.

