

## **Backpack guidelines for your child**

School backpacks were felt to be **heavy by 79.1% of children**, to cause **fatigue by 65.7%**, and to cause **back pain by 46.1%**. Poor posture when carrying a loaded backpack is one of the intrinsic risk factors for spinal problems, and it's magnified if students repeatedly carry a heavy load or carry it poorly. Fatigue is one of the most common symptoms of poor posture. It takes a lot of energy to hold the body in an awkward position, and, in turn, alters **breathing capacity which can be diminished by up to 30%**.

Providing children with a good school backpack is crucial, but educating them on how to use it appropriately is just as vital.

### **The right fit.**

- Wide padded shoulder straps (avoid narrow straps that may dig into shoulders) and an adjustable waist belt are essential
- The backpack should not exceed the length of your child's torso or width of their waist
- Compression straps fitted on the sides of the backpack help to tighten the load and stabilise the contents

### **Correct use.**

- The backpack should be worn close to the body, and about 2 inches above the waistline (or hollow of the back) so that the load is central to the back
- The Chiropractic Association of Australia recommends that backpacks should **never** weigh more than 10% of the child's weight
- The weight should be spread among the provided compartments, with the heaviest items closest to the back and at the bottom of the backpack
- A handy hint is to purchase a backpack that has reflective material to ensure your child is visible in poor lighting

If a backpack is too heavy your child will be pulled backward, and will be forced to bend forward at the hips to compensate. This causes an unnatural compression on the spine and over time, the shoulders and upper back can become rounded into a 'stooped posture' and your child or teen can develop shoulder, neck, and back pain.

**If you are unsure about whether your child's backpack is suitable feel free to bring both the backpack and your child into the team at Care Clinic for a thorough chiropractic analysis. Keeping their posture in check is fundamental for their development. Your Chiropractor can provide guidance on regular exercise routines that will help to address specific postural problems and strengthen their muscles to help maintain improved posture.**

Good posture and correct fit backpack



Poor posture and backpack choice



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