

# **BACKPACK SAFETY CHECKLIST**

## **1. Backpacks should weigh no more than 10% of a child's body weight.**

- a. A bag that is too heavy can place undue amounts of stress on a growing spine.
- b. Make sure your child is not leaning forward or backward to accommodate the bag's weight.

## **2. Make sure the child is only carrying essential items to reduce backpack weight.**

- a. Over the year, backpacks can get cluttered with non-essential items, so be sure to clean the bag out regularly.
- b. Leave any textbooks and binders at home or in a locker when they are not needed.

## **3. The size of the backpack matters.**

- a. Your child's backpack should not be an item that a child can 'grow into.'
- b. The pack should be no wider than your child's shoulders, and should not extend below the hips.

## **4. Distribute the weight of the bag's contents as evenly as possible.**

- a. Balancing the contents of your child's bag will help reduce discomfort and stress.
- b. If the bag has side pockets, keep them evenly filled to help maintain proper posture.

## **5. Keep items centered to help keep your child balanced.**

- a. Large books, binders, and laptops should be placed directly against the back, with smaller items placed furthest from the back.
- b. Make sure the contents of the bag rest flat against the back, packing irregularly shaped objects away from the back.

## **6. Always carry a backpack using both straps.**

- a. The goal is to safely distribute the weight of the pack. Using both straps will ensure that weight is evenly distributed across the back, reducing spinal stress.
- b. Carrying a pack on one side will shift the entire weight of its contents to one side and may contribute to spinal health problems.

## **7. Adjust the bag according to the child's shoulders and hips.**

- a. A properly adjusted backpack will sit at shoulder height, and will rest at or above the child's
- b. An incorrectly set backpack will place undue pressure on the shoulders and spine.

## **8. Choose a bag with wide, padded straps.**

- a. Wide straps help distribute the weight of the pack evenly.
- b. Padded straps will help to ensure comfort.

## **9. Choose a bag with chest and lumbar straps to reduce stress.**

- a. These straps will help reduce stress on the neck, shoulders, and spine.
- b. Straps also promote proper posture while wearing the backpack, which is essential for keeping a growing spine healthy.