



BACK FACTS: Handbags

Some people carry what seems like the world in their handbag. Similar to carrying a heavy backpack, a heavy shoulder bag or purse can injure your back, neck and shoulders. Hand and shoulder bags also create poor posture by encouraging the carrier to lean to one side. This affects posture, balance and movement.



Here are some helpful tips to protect your muscles from a heavy handbag.

Choosing a handbag

1. Choose a handbag that is proportionate to your body size and no larger than what is needed. Your handbag should not weigh more than 10 per cent of your body weight up to a maximum of 15 pounds.
2. The shoulder straps should be wide and adjustable. Ensure that the straps do not cut into your shoulder. Shoulder straps that dig into the muscles, put pressure on the nerves.
3. If possible, select a strap that is long enough to place over your head so as to rest on the shoulder opposite the handbag. This will help distribute the weight of the bag more evenly.
4. Choose a handbag that has several individual pockets instead of one large compartment. This will help to distribute the weight of the contents more evenly and keep them from shifting.

Packing a handbag

1. Resist the urge to carry everything with you all day. Consider leaving less commonly used items behind. Keep that heavy laptop out of your bag!
2. Change the size and weight of your wallet once in a while. You may also consider one wallet for your work and a different one for when you go out, as you may need different objects for both.
3. Ensure the weight is evenly distributed in the purse by using all the pockets.

Carrying a handbag

1. Use both hands to check the weight of the handbag.
2. Instead of always carrying your handbag on the same shoulder, switch sides often so each shoulder gets a rest.
3. Square your shoulders - many women have a habit of lifting the shoulder on which the purse is carried to keep the straps from slipping.

More tips

1. Try to maintain good posture. When standing, your head, shoulders, hips and ankles should line-up, one comfortably above the other. Your knees should be slightly bent and your feet should be shoulder-width apart or more.
2. If you can walk to lunch or a meeting, lock your purse in your desk or locker and carry only your cash and/or credit cards in a pocket.
3. Exercise can help prevent injury. Specific strengthening exercises for the back and abdominal or core area will help promote good posture, which will, in turn, further help to condition muscles and prevent injury.

Canada's chiropractors – here to help

Chiropractors can help you prevent back, neck and shoulder problems. Should you suffer stress and strain from your heavy handbag, a chiropractor can also provide treatment for your pain.

Fact: 80 per cent of Canadians will suffer from back pain in their lifetime. If required, a chiropractor can treat your pain through a variety of methods. These can include: spinal and joint adjustment, modalities such as ultrasound or TENS, soft tissue therapy and therapeutic exercises.

For more information or to locate a chiropractor near you, please visit the Canadian Chiropractic Association website www.chiropracticcanada.ca.

Pack it light. Wear it right.

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