



**GORMAN**  
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HEALTH  
SOLUTIONS<sup>SM</sup>

**Gorman Optimal Health Solutions, Inc.**  
**333 North Oxford Valley Rd.**  
**Suite 502**  
**Fairless Hills, PA 19030**  
**215-9-HEALTH (943-2584)**  
**[www.GormanOptimalHealth.com](http://www.GormanOptimalHealth.com)**

### **Backpacks: Lighten Your Child's Load**

As millions of kids get ready to go back to school, many will pull out old backpacks or purchase new ones. While the books, homework assignments, lunches, and other school gear those bags carry may be important for success in school, some experts point to backpack use as the leading cause of a growing trend in back pain among youngsters. In fact, a recent study conducted in Italy found that nearly 60 percent of children carrying heavy backpacks experienced back pain as a result.

Some states, such as California and New Jersey, have taken legislative action to reduce the weight of students' backpacks in their school districts. However, even for residents of those states, government regulation may not be enough. Whether you are looking out for your child's welfare or you use a backpack yourself, here are some steps recommended by the American Chiropractic Association to lighten the load.

#### **Tips for purchasing a new pack:**

- **Be selective.** Look for ergonomically designed packs, such as the Samsonite Chiropak, that distribute weight evenly along the shoulders and spine. Ask your chiropractor for suggestions, and have him or her look at the fit of a pack you have purchased.

- **Go small.** The smaller the pack, the less likely your child is to overload it with books and other materials. Look for packs that feature special compartments for different types of items— such as pencils, calculators, books, or folders.
- **Select wide, padded straps.** Backpacks that are designed with broader straps and ample padding are much more comfortable— and healthier.

#### **How to use a backpack wisely:**

- **Lighten up.** Aim for a backpack weight of no more than 10 percent of your child's body weight. That means if your child weighs 85 pounds, her pack shouldn't exceed 8.5 pounds. If your child is required to carry weight above that 10 percent, talk to your child's teacher about ways to reduce the load.
- **Position correctly.** A properly adjusted backpack will create less stress on the back. Make sure the pack doesn't hang too low (four inches or more below the waist) which can strain the back.
- **Two is better than one.** Educate your child about the importance of wearing both shoulder straps, which will distribute weight more evenly.

If you or your child experience tingling or numbness in the hands, or discomfort in the back or neck after wearing a backpack, discontinue use and seek the advice of your doctor of chiropractic.

### **Chiropractic Care Can Help....**

**Our goal is to adjust the spine and help stimulate your body's natural healing process.**

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