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## [Back to School Injuries](#)

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As we enter the time of year when children are returning to school, backpack awareness is key to keeping children injury free for the school year.

One area that public health providers play a large role in is health promotion. Health promotion ranges from disease prevention to health promoting changes in lifestyle to general injury prevention strategies. As we enter the time of year when children are returning to school, backpack awareness is key for

keeping children injury free for the school year.

The National Safety Council recommends when selecting a backpack to look for:

- An ergonomic design
- The correct size: never wider or longer than your child's torso and never hanging more than 4 inches below the waist
- Padded back and shoulder straps
- Hip and chest belts to help transfer some of the weight to the hips and torso
- Multiple compartments to better distribute the weight
- Compression straps on the sides or bottom to stabilize the contents
- Reflective material

Here are a few helpful tips from [American Occupational Therapy Association](#) to promote backpack safety:

- A child's backpack should weigh no more than about 10% of their body weight. For example, if a student weighs 100 pounds, their backpack should not weigh more than about 10 pounds.
- You want to load heaviest items closest to the child's back.
- Arrange books and materials so they will not slide around in the backpack.
- Make sure the items your child carries to and from school are necessary for the day's activities. Extra items just add unnecessary weight.
- If the backpack is too heavy, have your child hand carry a book or item outside of the backpack.
- If the backpack is consistently too heavy, consider a rolling backpack if your school allows it.
- Distribute weight evenly by wearing both straps over shoulders.
- Adjust the backpack so it fits snugly on your child's back and does not hang loosely as this can strain muscles.
- Wear the waist belt if the back pack has one as this helps distribute weight evenly.
- The bottom of the back pack should rest in the curve of your child's lower back.

Following these backpack safety habits and techniques will help your child minimize their risk of injury and enjoy the school year.

Additional information can be found at:

<http://www.nsc.org/learn/safety-knowledge/Pages/backpack-safety-for-kids.aspx>

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/safety-prevention/at-play/Pages/Backpack-Safety.aspx>

[http://kidshealth.org/parent/firstaid\\_safe/outdoor/backpack.html](http://kidshealth.org/parent/firstaid_safe/outdoor/backpack.html)

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