

wellness

POSTURE

Lighten Your Backpack

Heavy backpacks, especially if they're worn on one shoulder, can throw you off balance and cause your neck and shoulders to ache.

While it's convenient to have everything with you and not have to hit your locker, lugging all that weight around is tough on your body.

Start by buying a lightweight backpack with multiple compartments, a hip belt, and well-padded straps.

Pack for the day, carrying only what you need. The total weight shouldn't be more than 20 percent of your body weight. And some who treat back pain in teens say no more than 15 percent. Weigh 100 pounds? Pack less than 15 or 20 pounds.

Put the heaviest items in the back and distribute your stuff in different compartments. That distributes the weight, so one part of your back isn't too stressed. Adjust the straps, too, so you wear the pack close to your body.

Carry your backpack over both shoulders or use a single strap that goes over your head and rests on the opposite side of the backpack. Use the hip belt, too, to take some of the weight off your back and shoulders.

REVIEW ONLY

School Datebooks

Too Much Weight on Your Back?

How long has it been since you unloaded your backpack and lightened your load?

Watch for these weighty—and maybe unnecessary items:

- A too-hefty zipper notebook
- Extra pair of shoes
- Book you finished reading weeks ago
- Pockets and returned papers you could leave at home
- Dictionary from last year's Spanish class
- Water bottle when you could use school water

DO NOT SUBMIT

FOR PRINT

What's in Your Backpack?

Items I've got to carry every day:

Weigh In

Stand on the scale with your backpack. Now stand without it. How much extra weight are you packing?