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FOR

Backpack Safety and Children's Health

It's not just a backpack issue

Article contributed by Dr. Noel Plasker, D.C.

Parents and educators everywhere are concerned about the burdens that children are lugging around each day in the form of poorly designed, improperly packed and inappropriately worn backpacks. This phenomenon has also become a major focus of chiropractors who have recognized that early childhood back stress is a major cause of spinal instability and nerve related health problems.

Unfortunately, these silent injuries can lay dormant for years, only to express themselves as serious spinal problems in adults. According to a study in the April 1, 2005 issue of *Spine*, signs of spinal disc degeneration appeared on MRI scans of approximately one-third of the 13-year old children who were studied, even though only some of them were experiencing back pain. In another study in the October 18, 2004 issue of the *Journal of Vertebral Subluxation Research*, 96% of the children examined were found to have pelvic subluxations. The spinal degenerative arthritis that results from subluxations are one of the most common preventable diseases affecting society today, but prevention must start at an early age.

In response to parent concerns, many state lawmakers are introducing legislation to mandate maximum backpack weight, redesign text books and even purchase an extra set of books for each child to use at home. Rather than wait for new laws to be passed, every parent and child should take the responsibility to increase their knowledge on backpack safety so they can use good lifting and body

awareness techniques, and prevent unnecessary injuries. This will also ensure that children keep their spine and nerve system healthy as they grow.

Here are some important **Backpack Safety Tips** that you can begin using immediately:

- If possible, use a backpack with wheels and roll it
- Otherwise use a backpack with padded shoulder straps and lumbar support, and wear both shoulder straps
- Pack only what you need and place heavy items on the bottom
- Bend at the knees when lifting the backpack
- Never lift more than 15% of your body weight:

<u>If your body weighs:</u>	<u>You may carry up to:</u>
50 pounds	7.5 pounds
70 pounds	10.5 pounds
80 pounds	12.0 pounds
100 pounds	15.0 pounds
120 pounds	18.0 pounds

Chart provided by Backpack Safety America

Make backpack safety and spinal health a priority. Invest in a quality backpack, use it properly, and make an appointment for your children to receive a spinal examination today.

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