

29 January 2018

It's that time of the year again and as back to school preparations are taking place Australian chiropractors are encouraging parents to be mindful of their child's spinal health this new school year.

The back to school period is a great time for parents to check the fitting of their child's backpack and by making a few simple changes may help prevent poor posture and long-term spinal health issues.

Dr Andrew Lawrence, President of the Chiropractors' Association of Australia (CAA), says some of the signs of poor posture to look out for from an incorrectly worn backpack may include: forward head posture, slouching and uneven hips. Identifying and stopping these signs early on is important as the spine is still developing during the adolescent years.

Avoiding back to school backache is easy with these simple tips on how to wear a backpack correctly:

Size: make sure the backpack is appropriately sized and no wider than the child's chest.

Weight: backpacks should ideally be no heavier than 10 per cent of a student's weight when packed. Some of the ways to keep the weight of the load down is by packing only essential items and storing unrequired items in a school locker.

Straps: both shoulder straps (preferably padded) should always be worn. Make sure to secure the sternum, waist and compression straps.

Position: the backpack shouldn't be worn any lower than the hollow of the lower back with all heavy items positioned at the base of the pack, closest to the spine.

To help educate both children and parents on how to correctly wear a backpack, the Chiropractors' Association of Australia (CAA) has developed an augmented reality experience as part of the Straighten Up app. Simply scan the app card available at your local CAA chiropractor and watch the image come to life, providing an interactive way to see how the spine is effected by the correct and incorrect wearing of a backpack.

Designed to act as "your pocket chiropractor", the Straighten Up app also contains posture reminders, spinal health tips and a 3-minute exercise program. You can download the Straighten Up (Australia) app from the App Store or Google Play.

CAA welcomes parents to make an appointment at your local CAA chiropractor this back to school period for more advice and assistance on selecting the right backpack, making sure it is fitted correctly to suit the child's current level of development and to receive a copy of the back to school Straighten Up app card.

For more information on how to maintain a healthy spine, please visit www.chiropractors.asn.au

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