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Give Your Child's Back a Good Pack

As children return to school this January, Australian chiropractors are encouraging parents to look at the quality and fit of their child's backpack.

"School can be a challenging time for some children, so ensuring they are as comfortable as possible is important for their physical and mental development," says Australian Chiropractors Association (ACA) President Dr Anthony Coxon.

What to look for in a backpack:

1. Make sure the backpack is the right size for your child, no wider than their chest and below the hollow of their back.
2. A moulded frame on the back, that when adjusted fits their spine.
3. A bag made from a light weight material like canvas, with two padded straps.
4. Adjustable waist and sternum straps.
5. Separate compartments that allow for easy packing and weight distribution.

How to carry the backpack in a 'spine safe' way:

1. Ensure that the weight of the backpack is no more than 10% of your child's weight when packed. Only pack essentials to lessen the load, perhaps use school lockers if available.
2. Pack the heaviest items closest to the spine and make sure all zippers are done up all the way.
3. Secure the sternum and waist straps (they're there for a reason).
4. Always wear both straps, tell the kids it's not cool to 'one strap it' anymore.
5. Try to reduce time spent wearing the backpack to no more than 30 minutes at any one time.

If parents are looking for a backpack that ticks all the boxes above, the ACA along with Spartan School Supplies and Macquarie University have developed the 'Chiropak'. Find out more about the [Spartan 'Chiropak'](#).

ACA has developed two videos the 'back to school' season this year:

Interviewing parents about the use of their child's backpack: [YouTube](#) [Downloadable File](#)

Tips for correct fitting and wearing of a backpack: [YouTube](#) [Downloadable File](#)

Australia's Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines for Children aged 5–12 Years recommends children should undertake at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity everyday.¹ As an added bonus, this will assist in limiting their screen time as well. Use of electronic media for entertainment should be limited to less than 2 hours per day.

"It is ok to have some mild to moderate levels of spinal pain that is associated with physical activity," says Dr Coxon. "This pain is more often benign and self-limiting and professional help should be sought if pain persists."

ACA encourages parents to make an appointment with their local ACA chiropractor at locatechiropractor.com.au before school resumes for advice on selecting the right backpack and making sure it is fitted correctly to suit a child's current level of development, as well as advice on healthy lifestyle management.

The annual ACA Back to School campaign is designed to educate parents and their children not only on how to best wear and fit a backpack, but how to maintain a healthy, spine safe lifestyle all year round. For more information on ACA's Back to School campaign, visit chiropractors.asn.au/backtoschool

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¹ Health.gov.au. (2018). Department of Health | Australia's Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines. [online] Available at: <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/content/health-pubhlth-strateg-phys-act-guidelines>