

# Orthopaedic Connection

## Love Your Backpack

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### *Transforming patient information into patient understanding.*

Backpacks are wonderful helpers if you know how to use them right.

They are a convenient way for children to carry stuff for school and other activities and they are affordable and easily available.

If you don't know how to use backpacks they can be a pain in the .... back!

Since backpacks are here to stay what advice do I give to parents?

Get a lightweight, sturdy one from places that specialize in hiking and outdoor equipment. Why? They may cost a little more, but they have several features designed to minimize discomfort. They have wide shoulder straps and an internal frame that provides rigidity to the backpack. These things help to distribute weight evenly over the back. A waist belt is also important. Why? Get this; a waist strap is known to transfer 90% of the weight onto the hips and they are mechanically better able to carry the load than your back.

Some packs even have lumbar pads, which rest in the curve of the back and supply extra support.

A good rule is a backpack weight limit of 15% of body weight.

Wear it over both shoulders, not just one as some kids do.

Wear it high on the back to decrease strain in the lower back.

Occasionally back pain in children can be from psychological or social factors, but I would never want to call back pain in children that kind of a problem without ruling out other causes which can be very serious.

Some children are out of shape. Therapists call it weak core stability. Poor posture, sedentary lifestyle, heavy backpacks. Back says ouch!

A good posture strengthening exercise for kids is to stand holding a sturdy book on the head. Push the head up into the weight of the book. Then when standing as straight as they can raise the book over the head with both hands ten times. This strengthens back and scapular muscles.

Lastly a novel device is the BackTpack that was designed as an alternative to backpacks. It is worn like a vest and has side bags that distribute weight to both sides of the body rather than the back.

### **Gratiot County Herald Archive and Office Website**

I hope what you have read has raised questions. No problem!

Please log onto [www.orthopodsurgeon.com](http://www.orthopodsurgeon.com). It has a huge amount of musculoskeletal information in the Website and the Archive of all previous GCH articles.

Check it out and be amazed what you can learn.

Good health. Good life. All the best to you. Be well.

Dr. Haverbush