



BACKPACK PROBLEM - CHILDREN'S BOOK BAGS

Bill Rogers

Rev: 02 August 2006

In a survey conducted by the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons, 58 percent of orthopaedists reported seeing school-age patients complaining of back and shoulder pain caused by weighty backpacks. "The extra stress placed on the spine and shoulder from the heavy loads is causing some unnecessary problems in children," says orthopaedic surgeon Dr. Charlotte B. Alexander. A few guidelines for students: a backpack's weight shouldn't exceed 20 percent of your body weight; use a hip strap for heavier weights; use a backpack with a padded back; use both of the backpack's straps, firmly tightened, to hold the pack two inches above the waist; make frequent trips to your locker to replace books."

NOTES

The above is reprinted from the February 2000 issue of Reader's Digest, and was reprinted in the TATC newsletter, The Appalachian Hiker, with permission from both Readers's Digest and from the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons.

In place of a bookbag, often called a backpack, you might consider a wheeled suitcase such as travelers use, or a wheeled bookbag. Check with your school administrator to see if these are allowed in school and on the bus.

On *Good Morning America*, on 29 July 2006, their 'expert' (talking about sleeping bags and backpacks) said kids backpacks should not exceed 15% of the child's weight.

P.S.

Remember that even adults should limit themselves to 20% and never more than 25% of body weight. The comment above at having the pack two inches above the waist is, I believe, aimed at those youngsters who let the book bag backpack sag down onto their rumps - a very bad situation.

In backpacking seminars I suggest that weight be centered between the shoulders for a man, and centered at the lower back for a woman.

And yes, your dog also can carry a properly fitted backpack. Check with your veterinarian to see whether your dog is healthy enough and in good enough condition (body and foot pads) to carry a backpack, and how much weight your dog can safely and comfortably carry. Refer to the TATC Education Handout titled: "HIKING WITH A DOG - INCLUDING: THE WILD FILE [DE-SKUNKING A DOG], and DOGS AND GIARDIA."