

How to Choose a Good Backpack

Backpacks are a wonderful way to carry around all your necessities for the day. Overloaded and ill fitting backpacks can cause a number of problems including poor posture and stress on the soft tissue in the neck and back. This unnecessary strain on muscles and joints can leave you vulnerable for injury. Here are some tips on how to insure your backpack fits properly.

What to look for when buying a backpack:

- Padded back to reduce pressure and prevents contents from poking into you
- Padded contoured shoulder/chest straps to reduce pressure and balance the weight
- Adjustable Shoulder straps 2" wide
- Waist belt/hip strap to distribute the load. Hip straps send the weight of the pack to your legs which are equipped to carry more weight and therefore you tire less quickly
- Compression Straps on the sides or bottom of the pack to compress and stabilize its contents
- Reflective material to increase visibility at night
- Lightweight material to decrease the load you will be carrying

How should a backpack fit?

- A full backpack should weigh no more than 15% of your body weight – if you can't walk and talk without being out of breath it is too heavy
- Pack by weight not by size, the heaviest items should be the closest to your back
- Stand tall and use both shoulder straps – using only one strap loads one side of the body and causes you to lean
- Adjust shoulder straps so the pack sits about 2 inches above the waist
- Your arms should be able to move freely
- Straps should not dig into the shoulders
- Pack should fit evenly on the midback

How will I know if the pack isn't fitting right or if it's too heavy?

- Pain while the pack is on
- Tingling and numbness in arms
- Red marks on the shoulders

For more information check out the Canadian Physiotherapy Association:

<http://www.physiotherapy.ca/PublicUploads/222460Backpack%20Information%20Sheet%20Sept07.pdf>