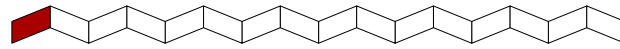




STUDENT BACKPACKS



Safety & Security Fact Sheet

Various child safety groups have voiced a growing concern about the amount of weight students carry in their backpacks and how they carry their backpacks. The following are guidelines recommended by pediatricians and safety professionals:

- ✓ **Reduce the weight.** Students should not carry more than 10 percent of their own body weight. Remove excess items that are not necessary.
- ✓ **Leave key chain collections at home.** A popular fad in elementary schools can lead to tragedy. Large collections of key chains worn on the exterior of backpacks have become ensnared on school bus handrails and doors. These can be as dangerous as loose clothing drawstrings, which have resulted in numerous accidental deaths nationwide.
- ✓ **Use both straps to carry the backpack.** When worn over one shoulder, the weight is off center, which causes stress to the student's spine that can lead to a back injury.
- ✓ **Wear the backpack "high and close."** Adjust the straps so that the backpack is worn close to the body with the weight up near the shoulders, not in the small of the back.
- ✓ **Identification.** The student's name and telephone number should be put on a card and kept inside the backpack. It is better to keep this information hidden rather than appear openly.



Back injuries do not often reveal themselves immediately. The effects of carrying an overweight backpack, or carrying a backpack improperly, are cumulative. It is hard to convince a young person of the hazard, but many adults understand all too well the debilitating effects of a back injury. It is the responsibility of school personnel and parents to work together to help students avoid chronic conditions later in life.

For more information, visit our web site, www.fcps.edu/fts/safety-security/factsheets/saf-16.pdf
If you need assistance, call the safety section at 703-658-3770.