

# Pack it light, Wear it right!

## Backpack Awareness

It's well into October, and school is officially underway. Your child is finally settling into his or her new school or new classroom and getting into the swing of things. I know you have probably asked your child about how he or she is adjusting to his or her studies, teachers, and classmates. Have you considered asking your child about his or her backpack? Backpacks are a daily necessity for students at Fontainebleau Junior High School. Backpacks allow students to carry their books, writing utensils, and binders in an efficient manner as they pursue their studies throughout the school day. However, backpacks can be detrimental to a child's well-being. Wearing and packing a backpack wrongly can cause neck, shoulder, and back muscle strains, pains, and posture problems. Nearly 79 million students carry backpacks daily, and 55% of these students carry a backpack that is heavier than the recommended guideline of 10% of the child's total body weight. According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission in 2013, 22,200 patients were treated in clinics, emergency rooms, and doctors' offices for strains, sprains, dislocations, and fractures related to backpacks. In a study with American student participants between the ages of 11-15 years old, 64% of the students reported back pain related to heavy backpacks. Backpacks are an efficient necessity for students pursuing their education, but they can cause injury to students that do not have proper knowledge of how to pick them, pack them, and wear them.

Promoting backpack awareness is pertinent to preventing the increase in backpack related injuries. As a parent, you can help promote a healthy lifestyle for your child by learning more about backpacks, so you can encourage them to use proper backpack techniques. There are a few simple things you can do for your child starting today.

- Encourage your child to wear both straps and to wear his or her backpack near the shoulders.
- Weigh your child's backpack on your home scale. It is nationally recommended that your child's backpack not be more than 10% of his or her body weight.
- Glance inside your child's backpack. Help him or her remove items that are not pertinent to their school day.
- Look at how your child's backpack is organized. Heavier items should be placed in the back of the backpack, and all pockets on the backpack should be used to equally distribute the weight.
- Encourage your child to perform stretching and strengthening exercises to strengthen the back, neck, abdominal, and shoulder muscles to promote proper posture.

For more information regarding backpack awareness, please review the following resources. Attached is a backpack shopping list of tips, online sites, and prices. A 3-minute ABC Action News clip about backpack awareness and safety is available for view.

ABC Action News link

<http://www.abcactionnews.com/lifestyle/family/parents-in-action-backpack-safety>