

NASN

National Association of School Nurses Recommendations on *backpacks*:

History:

In recent years, backpacks have been used by children more widely and with increased weight loads. The backpacks are loaded with schoolbooks, athletic equipment, musical instruments and other items for school. Thus, students are presenting with backaches related to the usage of backpacks.

Description of Issue:

School nurses are concerned about increasing student complaints of pain in the back, neck, and shoulder, increased school nurse office visits, and subsequent loss of educational time. Students often choose a poorly constructed backpack, wear the backpack improperly, and carry weights that exceed 20% of their body weight.

Recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics for choosing the correct backpack include:

- Do not carry weight greater than 20% of body weight
- Select a style that has padded shoulders and waist strap
- Use both shoulder straps
- Tighten the straps so the pack is close to the body
- Distribute the weight of objects evenly in the backpack
- Utilize all compartments
- Pack heaviest objects close to the back with center of gravity near the pelvis

Conclusion:

It is the position of the National Association of School Nurses that improper use of backpacks is not healthy for anyone, especially for children who are more susceptible to injury because their bodies are growing and developing.