

Children Carry a Heavy Load  
BY: Melissa Jeremiah, RN, Director of Operations  
Hoosier Uplands Home Health Care & Hospice

As the grandparent of an 8 year old, I felt it was important to investigate how to save my granddaughters back from harm. This is when I discovered there is actually a National School Backpack Awareness Day; which is September 20<sup>th</sup> this year. I feel if kids can learn at an early age how to guard her back from harm; this will carry over in to their life as they grow.

According to the American Occupational Therapy Association, Inc., “85% of college student report pain and strain in their necks, backs and shoulders.” “Injuries caused from a heavy backpack sent 2,000 students to the hospital.”

One thing I had no idea of was that you should utilize the different compartments to distribute weight. Heavier items should be closer to the back center of the backpack. Lighter items should be in the front of the backpack, furthest away from the back. Mid weight items should be in the middle of the backpack.

The backpack should weigh no more than 10% of the child’s weight. Therefore; if your child weighs 80 pounds, their backpack should weigh no more than 8 pounds. 8 pounds is not as much as you would think. A gallon of milk weighs approximately 8.6 pounds. Carrying a backpack that is heavier than recommended can cause falls and spinal injury.

Next you should teach your child to pick up the backpack by bending and lifting in the knees.

The backpack when being carried should rest snugly against the back. Parents should adjust the shoulder and waist straps. Make sure the backpack does not extend past your child’s shoulders or below the top of their hips.

Your children trust you to keep them safe. Please help them keep their backs safe!