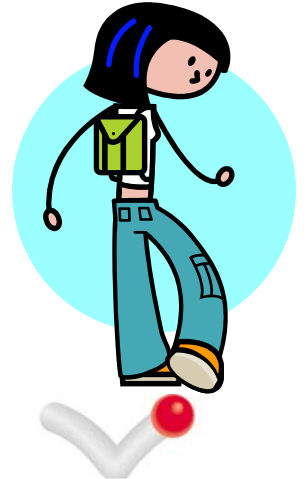


Feature

Physiotherapists urge school kids to... Lighten Up

The **Saskatchewan Physiotherapy Association (SPA)** urges parents to monitor the use of their child's backpack. School children risk their health and injury to their spines and arms by carrying heavy backpacks to school. A recent study investigated the link between backpacks and back pain in school children. Of 1122 backpack users, 74.4 per cent were classified as having back pain. Children may complain of pain, numbness/tingling in the arms and hands due to nerve compression as well as pain in various regions of the spine. These may lead to chronic problems that linger into adulthood.

Continued on page 2 -Tips for Backpack Use



PHYSIOTHERAPY. IT'LL MOVE YOU.
LA PHYSIOTHÉRAPIE. REDÉCOUVREZ LE MOUVEMENT.



Healthy Kids. Healthy Families. Physical Activity can make the connection.

Physical activity builds a great foundation for a healthy life. It's a win-win event for you and your child.

Physical activity can:

- Increase self-esteem and capacity for learning.
- Help kids handle stress.
- Build and maintain healthy bones, muscles and joints.
- Help control weight.

Experience active family fun.

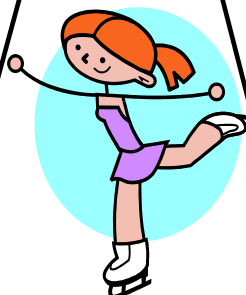
Create family traditions and lasting memories. Time together is time treasured.

- **Family adventures.** See the sights right in your community. Try hiking, berry picking, a walking tour of the city.

- **Gifts of physical activity.** Give gifts that encourage physical activity like a pair of athletic shoes or swimsuit. Choose toys that make you move, such as a soccer ball or a bicycle.

- **Celebrate the seasons.** Fall: Try the game Frisbee-golf or hike through the leaves. Winter: Go sledding or build a snowman.

- **Community Service:** Volunteer as a family and benefit others while benefiting yourself. Do litter patrol or team up to clean up a favourite park.



It's not just an action, it's a lifestyle.

- **Walk and Talk:** Take a walk with your child while practicing spelling words, multiplication tables or geography facts.
- **Household Jobs:** Encourage responsibility and home maintenance skills. Have your children help vacuum, wash floors, mow the lawn, shovel the snow, walk the dog, wash the car and more.
- **Indoor Fun:** Designate a space where kids can roll, climb, jump, dance and tumble. Garages (without cars) can become an activity zone on rainy or snowy days.
- **Traveling Locker Room:** Stash a box in the family car that holds balls, baseball gloves, a jump rope, Frisbee, kite, etc. You'll always be ready for fun.
- **Experience the fun together:** Kids need to play. And so do you.

Information adapted from CDC internet resources.



Lighten Up

(continued from page 1)

Physiotherapists recommend that backpacks should:

- **Be the right size for the person using it.** Bigger is not better. The shoulder straps should not dig in to the shoulders; the bottom of the pack should rest in the contour of the lower back; and the pack should "sit" evenly in the middle of the back, not "sag down" toward the buttocks.
- **Be made of lightweight materials** – to reduce the weight, and with **lots of storage compartments** to enable better storage and the ability to balance the weight of the contents throughout the entire pack. **Place larger flat items closest to the back.**
- **Have a padded back** – to reduce pressure and prevent the pack's contents from digging into the back.
- **Have padded, contoured, shoulder and chest straps** – to decrease pressure and balance the weight. Backpacks should have thickly padded (2 inches wide), adjustable shoulder straps which should be adjusted so the bottom of the pack sits two inches above the waist;
- **Have a waist belt or hip strap** – to distribute some of the load to the pelvis. The waist belt sends the weight of the pack down through the legs, which are more used to carrying weight; and it will maintain the central position keeping the pack closer to the back.
- **Have compression straps** – on the sides or bottom of the backpack to help compress the contents of the backpack and stabilize the articles.
- **Have reflective material** – for visibility to drivers at night.

Physiotherapists recommend the following tips for backpack use:

- **Use both shoulder straps** to help distribute the weight of the pack evenly and to promote a good posture. Using only one strap loads the entire weight of the bag over one shoulder, resulting in back pain and strain to the neck and shoulders. Leaning forward may affect the natural curve in the lower back, and increase the curve of the upper back and shoulders.
- **Keep the weight manageable.** A full backpack should never weigh more than 15 per cent (15%) of the carriers' body weight. For example, someone weighing 115 lbs. (52 kg) should not carry more than 17 lbs. (7.8 kg). Remember, **carrying heavy loads incorrectly can lead to back strain or even chronic problems.**
- **Maintain a good posture at all times**, standing tall with your head and neck aligned with your shoulders. Keeping your shoulders pulled gently back and down will help. This position may feel strange at first, but keep at it!

More information on backpacks and proper stretching exercises can be found at:

www.physiotherapy.ca/information sheets.htm



Canadian
Physiotherapy
Association Association
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Kids in the Kitchen

This holiday season why not spend some time with your kids in the kitchen? Teaching children and teens how to cook makes it more likely that they will try new (healthier) foods. Cooking for others also increases self-esteem and self-confidence. It is also a great opportunity to spend time together. Here are some ideas to try:



Curry Dip

Mix everything together in a medium sized bowl

- 1 cup (250 ml) plain yogurt
- ¼ cup shredded carrots
- 2 teaspoons minced green onions
- 1 Tablespoon mayonnaise
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- ¼ teaspoon curry powder
- dash pepper

Chill and serve with raw vegetables like celery, carrots, turnips, peppers or cucumbers



Peach Parfait

Drain 1 small can of peaches. Puree peaches in your blender until fairly smooth leaving some larger pieces. Add a dash of cinnamon or nutmeg. Layer peach sauce with low fat ice cream or frozen yogurt in a pretty glass or bowl. Top with sliced strawberries, frozen blueberries or mandarin orange pieces.

Val Irvine – SHR Public Health Nutritionist