



Sigmund Miller, DC, FICC - Executive Director  
3121 Rte. 22 East, Suite 302, Branchburg, NJ 08876  
908.722.5678 office - 908.722.5677 fax  
www.anjc.info

Contact: Tom Cosentino  
iMedia Public Relations  
609-514-2643

### **Association of NJ Chiropractors Launches Community Program to Evaluate Children's Backpacks**

Branchburg, NJ (August 1, 2011) – Choosing the right backpack may be one of the most important school supplies a parent can purchase for their child in regards to their health and safety. Is your child's backpack a good fit? The Association of New Jersey Chiropractors (ANJC), one of the largest associations of its kind in the nation with almost 2000 members statewide, believes that backpack safety is a critical health concern that needs to be addressed.

To help parents choose the right "fit" for their child, the ANJC is offering a community service program to guide parents through the process. Parents can visit the ANJC website: [www.njchiropractors.com](http://www.njchiropractors.com) and locate a local ANJC member participating and call their office. Let their staff know you'd like to have your child evaluated to make sure their backpack is a good fit.

Every September, more than 20 million students go back to school carrying backpacks that are too heavy and pose a serious risk to the child's well being. According to the American Chiropractic Association (ACA), young children today suffer from back pain much earlier than previous generations, and poorly fitted, overly heavy backpacks are key factors. Along with back pain, improper backpack use can result in headaches, poor posture and various other health problems.

In addition to providing the community service program, the ANJC once again is issuing the following easy-to-follow guidelines to address this issue.

#### **Backpack Safety Tips**

- ▶ Choose It Right — Select a backpack that has wide cushioned straps, which will distribute the weight evenly on the shoulders. In addition, a backpack with a waist strap can help stabilize the load because it does not allow the backpack to flop around.
- ▶ Pack It Right — The weight of a loaded backpack should not exceed 15% of the body weight of the wearer, particularly in small children. Wearers should pack the heaviest objects first so they are carried lower and closer to the body. Students should pack only essential items in their backpack and, if necessary, make frequent stops at their lockers to exchange books. They can also lighten the load by carrying heavy textbooks under their arms rather than in backpacks.
- ▶ Lift It Right — Before attempting to lift it, check the weight of the backpack. Then, face the backpack, bend at the knees and lift with the legs, not with the back. Always use two hands and slip on one strap at a time.
- ▶ Wear It Right — Use both shoulder straps, making sure they are snug but not too tight. If the backpack touches the back above the collar line, the straps are too tight. If the pack has a waist strap, be sure to use it.

**Warning Signs for Parents** - Parents should look for the following warning signs that indicate a child's backpack may be causing a problem:

- ▶ The child cannot take off or put on the backpack without struggling.
- ▶ The child has to lean forward to carry the backpack.
- ▶ The child is experiencing numbness or weakness in the arms and/or legs.
- ▶ The child has one shoulder that is higher than the other.

Though a popular style now, parents should discourage the use of messenger-style bags, which are slung over one shoulder. Messenger-style bags put additional pressure on one shoulder, which can cause misalignment of the spine.

**Prevention is the Best Medicine** - It's important for parents to look for the warning signs that backpacks are being worn or used inappropriately. Early intervention can prevent serious injuries, the types of injuries which may result in long-term health problems, especially among young children whose bodies are still developing and growing. If parents notice any of the warning signs listed above, they should immediately speak to or visit their chiropractor.

**About the Association of New Jersey Chiropractors**

ANJC is one of the largest associations of chiropractors in the nation, with almost 2000 members, statewide. ANJC's mission is to educate its members on the latest technology and advancements in the profession and to become a trusted, relied upon information resource to the public regarding the benefits of chiropractic care. For more information or to locate an ANJC member doctor by town or zip code, please visit ANJC's public information website at [www.njchiropractors.com](http://www.njchiropractors.com) or call (908) 722-5678.