



# NEWS RELEASE

**For Immediate Release**

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## **The Association of New Jersey Chiropractors Offers Backpack Safety Tips for the Back-to-School Season**

*Backpacks are Major Culprit in Stresses and Strains*

Branchburg, N.J., — From kindergartners to college seniors, more than 40 million students carry backpacks. Studies show that more than 50 percent of these backpacks are overly heavy and pose a serious risk to the students' well-being. According to the American Chiropractic Association (ANJC), young children are suffering from back pain much earlier than previous generations, and weighty backpacks are a key factor.

The Association of New Jersey Chiropractors, one of the largest associations of its kind in the nation, believes that this is a key health issue that needs to be addressed. Along with back pain, students can suffer with headaches, posture problems and various other health problems.

“Research is revealing the negative effects of improper backpack use. Abnormal stress on a young child’s growing spine can have a significant negative impact,” says Dr. Kenneth Freedman, a member of the ANJC and a nationally recognized Backpack Safety America instructor. “Early exposure to back stress can lead to a lifetime of back pain.”

Here are some easy backpack safety tips to follow:

- **Choose the right back pack** - Choose a backpack that has wide cushioned straps which will distribute the weight on shoulders evenly. In addition, a backpack with a waist strap helps stabilize the load by not allowing the pack to flop around.
- **Make sure the fit is right** – Make sure the backpack fits properly. The straps should not be so tight that the pack goes above the collar line and the pack should not be wider than the shoulders. It should also be adjusted tightly enough so that it does not hang more than four inches below the belt line.
- **Pack correctly** - The weight of the loaded backpack should not be more than 15 percent of the body weight of the wearer, particularly with small children. Also, students should pack the heaviest objects first so that they are carried lower and closer to the body. Students should only be packing essential items and if needed, make frequent stops at a locker to exchange books.

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- **Lift correctly** - Check the weight of the backpack. Face the backpack before picking it up. Bend at the knees and make sure to lift with the legs, not with the back. Put on one strap at a time.
- **Wear correctly** - Use both straps and make sure they are snug. If there is a waist strap, use it. Don't sling the backpack over one shoulder. Messenger style bags, which get slung over one shoulder, should be rotated so that they're not being carried over the same shoulder all the time.

Parents should look for some the following warning signs that a child's backpack may be causing a problem: The child cannot take his backpack off or put it on without struggling; The child has to lean forward to carry his bag; The child has numbness or weakness in the arms and legs; The child has one shoulder that is higher than the other.

"If a parent notices any of these warning signs it is important they speak with their child's physician or chiropractor immediately," says Dr. Don DeFabio an ANJC member and parent. "Parents should encourage their child to tell them about pain or discomfort caused by a heavy backpack and they should also discuss ways to lighten the load that is taken home each night."

For additional information please visit the Association of New Jersey Chiropractors website: [www.njspine.org](http://www.njspine.org) or call (908) 722 – 5678.

#### **About the Association of New Jersey Chiropractors**

The ANJC is one of the largest associations of chiropractors in the nation with more than 1,200 members throughout the state. The mission of the ANJC is to educate its members in the latest technology and advancements in the profession, and to educate the public as to the benefits of Chiropractic care.

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