



Back Safety for “Back to Schoolers”

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We all want children to grow up healthy and productive. Many of the same rules you follow to avoid backaches at work apply to kids, too. Teach them these ergonomic principles so they can avoid musculoskeletal injuries for life.

Homework – Give small children a low table where they can do their homework. If the child’s feet don’t touch the floor, provide a footrest or box for the feet. Position the computer monitor so the top of the screen is at or below the child’s eye level. Or, give them a booster chair to raise them to that level.

Sports – If your child is involved in sports, make sure all equipment, including helmets, pads and shoes, fits properly. Be sure young athletes are taught proper form and technique, and stretching exercises appropriate to their age, experience level and specific sport.

Sit up straight – Encourage good posture when watching TV, playing electronic games or working on a computer. And, keep all those activities limited! Young spines need frequent exercise, especially outdoors, and especially in children who have been in school all day.

Strengthen bones – Ensure your child gets enough calcium every day. The calcium in milk is essential for healthy bones and reduces the risk of joint and muscle-related injuries.

Drink right – That means lots of H₂O! Be sure your child avoids high-sugar, caffeinated and carbonated drinks. Rather, encourage children to drink plenty of water. Soda has several ingredients that are bad for growing bones, including high levels of phosphoric acid, which can interfere with calcium absorption – a problem that could lead to osteoporosis down the road. And, soda drinking may be among the main causes of the current childhood obesity epidemic. Obesity in childhood can mean bodily aches and pains lifelong!

All-around health – Children should eat a balanced diet low in fats and high in fiber and whole grains, stretch, be physically active every day, and maintain a healthy weight.

Backpacks – Put your child’s fully loaded backpack on the bathroom scale and you will be amazed. Middle schoolers especially tote a ton of textbooks. Make sure your child isn’t expected to carry more than 10 percent of his or her own body weight in the backpack. Ask your child to remove items before school that he or she won’t need that day. Likewise, your kids should leave items in their school locker at the end of the day if they won’t be needed at home. Don’t let the load accumulate!

Encourage them to use both shoulder straps to balance the weight. A heavy backpack slung over just one shoulder unbalances the spine. And, inspect the should straps to ensure they are wide enough and have enough padding to properly spread the weight onto the front of the shoulder. Narrow and thin straps can “bite” into the shoulders and restrict circulation to the arms. Observe where the backpack rests against the child’s back, shortening the straps if the bottom of the backpack is below the level of their belt.



And, don't give YOURSELF a backache getting kids to school!

Remember the General Lifting Rules whenever you lift children, such as preschoolers who are riding along in car seats. Likewise for lifting musical instruments and athletic gear:

- Keep your head high, your chin tucked in and your back arched (maintain natural curves).
- Keep the child or the item close to your body and stand up straight, lifting with your legs, not your back.
- Don't bend at the waist to lift the child or object.
- Avoid twisting while lifting.
- Maintain a wide, balanced base of support by positioning your legs apart.

And, give your school children a hug every morning. Even big kids need hugs to make it through a school day! And you'll have a better day at work, too!