# Combat the Daily Grind: Backpack & Shoulder Bag Safety Tips from Life4orceTouch ~ Your National Board Certified Therapist

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| Being "COOL" Comes At A Price | http://www.ncbtmb.org/sites/default/files/images/X%20ray%20picture%20edit.jpg |

**W**ith school back in session, it’s no surprise to see your local students (perhaps even one of your own!), kids, or grandkids with backpacks stuffed to the brim with binders, books, and supplies. Naturally, as students mature, so will the positioning of the backpack. Enter middle school or high school, and gone are the days of “double strapping” it (i.e. wearing the backpack on both shoulders) and in come the days of slouching the backpack on one shoulder—the “cool” thing. As any Board Certified Massage Therapist will be the first to tell you, though, being cool is not always safe—especially in terms of your posture and maintaining musculo-skeletal (muscle and bone) health.

**Although it might seem trivial**, wearing a backpack on only one shoulder, or carrying a heavy computer bag on one side of the body, **can have serious effects on your shoulder, shoulder girdle, and spine**. The fact is, at least 14,000 children are treated for backpack-related injuries every year according to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. In this blog, we will explore this staggering fact, as well as provide tips to avoid becoming a victim of heavy backpacks and one-sided shoulder bags.

**When you do not properly distribute the weight of a bag**—either by carrying it on one shoulder or overloading it with weight—the following may result:

* Tension of the neck, back, and shoulder muscles, leading to discomfort and/or pain
* Muscle tightness
* Lower and mid-back pain
* Pelvic tilt
* Asymmetric Gait
* Sore hips
* Knee pain
* Scoliosis of the Spine (curvature of the Spine)

**What improper weight distribution means for your body**

**W**hen carrying a heavy backpack or shoulder bag almost daily, the spinal musculature contracts to compensate for the uneven distribution of weight in an attempt to bio-mechanically rebalance. The spine automatically leans to the other side, increasing pressure on thoracic spine (mid-back) and ribs. This type of imbalance causes muscle strain, muscle spasm, and often tired achy muscles in the short term. In the long term, especially while a child is growing, improper weight distribution can also influence his/her posture—further exacerbating a scoliosis or leading to a ‘learned’ asymmetry in posture. The heavy weight places a pull on the neck muscles, headache, and shoulder pain are commonly reported and, over time, pain and dysfunction throughout the spine, as well as upper and lower limbs.

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| Laptops, Purses andBrief cases……Adults You Too Need To Lighten Your Loads | aaa5_bagofholding_pockets.jpg  bag-causing-back-pain-article.jpg |

* If your bag or backpack has multiple compartments, equally distribute items to further help dispense the weight.
* Use both straps! This will ensure there is not too much stress on one side of the spine.
* Position your shoulder bag across the body from your non-dominant shoulder.
* For younger children, consider a backpack with a waist strap to further distribute the weight.
* Consider a backpack or computer bag on wheels.
* Pack heavier items closest to the back.
* Choose shoulder bags or backpacks with optimal shoulder and/or back padding for added comfort (and less stress on the muscles).

**Be proactive and prevent back pain from backpacks and shoulder bags:**

* Check in with your child if they are experiencing any aches or pains after school.
* Help your child choose the right size backpack (often, children goo for the biggest and fill it up even more so than needed!).
* Talk to the teachers as to what books are needed to be transported on a daily basis.
* Ask if there can be a copy of the larger reference books or textbooks in class, so your child can keep his/her copy at home.
* Be an active PTA participant and ensure there are sufficient lockers and time for children to store and exchange books between classes, thereby reducing the total load on the spine.

**What to do if you already experience these symptoms**

**I**f you or your student already experience any of the above symptoms, talk with Frank at Life4orceTouch your Board Certified Massage Therapist during your next session. Frank will likely be able to relieve ailments such as muscle tightness, lower and mid-back pain, and even help to restore balance to your body. If needed, your therapist will also be able to recommend the proper healthcare professional to discuss further treatment.

If you do not have a Board Certified Massage Therapist, call **Frank (267) 253-0197 at Life4orceTouch** to schedule your initial session.

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| Today’s Lesson? While it may be the “cool” thing to wear your backpack on one shoulder,  Your Body will appreciate the art of double strapping it! |