

BACK PACKS CAN BE A PAIN IN THE NECK

We have recently been researching the worldwide issue of students carting heavy loads to and from school. It is clear that Australian children are at risk of permanent spinal damage because of incorrectly packed and fitted school backpacks

According to an international study, daily backpack carrying is a frequent cause of discomfort for school children. School backpacks were felt to be heavy by 79.1% of children, to cause fatigue by 65.7%, and to cause back pain by 46.1%.*

As is an increasing trend in Australian Schools, we have considered offering the use of trolley bags as an alternative to the currently offered backpacks, but we have decided against it as comprehensive evidence indicates that trolley bags actually increase spinal rotation which possibly adds an extra source of stress.

*Since up to two-thirds of back injuries have been associated with trunk rotation, it could be assumed that posture associated with pulling a trolley has more risky components to it than carrying a backpack, within normal weight limits. Therefore, based on the results of this study, it appears to be better to pay attention to the appropriate weight of the backpack and carrying guidelines rather than utilising trolleys.***



With bags this heavy, it's no wonder many kids think school is a "pain in the back!"

The Chiropractors' Association of Australia (CAA) advises that ideally a school bag should not be more than 10% of a student's weight when packed (although some studies say 15% at the maximum). But generally there are demands on students to carry heavier loads. Padua has reduced this demand with the use of lockers and by the implementation of availability of text on DVD and the use of laptops in classrooms.

A growing spine needs all the support it can get. From Kindergarten to Year 12, Australian children spend over 2,500 days carting their schoolbags to and from school. The CAA together with Spartan and Macquarie University (NSW) joined forces to research and develop the 'Chiropak' backpack. This school bag is durable, functional, ergonomically designed and provides back support. If worn correctly, the 'Chiropak' is proven to reduce the incidence and severity of neck and back pain associated with the carriage of such loads. This is why Padua has decided to offer the 'Chiropak II' through the uniform shop as an alternative to the regular 'Smartpak' backpack.

It is essential that parents and the College work together in helping our students to maintain a healthy spine and therefore a healthier life.

Some tips to prevent back pain associated with the carrying of heavy backpacks

- Backpacks should be ideally no heavier than 10% of a student's weight when packed.
- Make sure the backpack is sturdy and appropriately sized - no wider than the student's chest
- Put comfort and fit at the top of the priority list, rather than good looks
- Choose a backpack with broad, padded shoulder straps
- Use both shoulder straps - never sling the pack over one shoulder
- Use waist straps attached - they are there for a good reason
- Don't wear the backpack any lower than the hollow of the lower back
- Don't overload the backpack - use school lockers and plan homework well in advance

If you are interested in purchasing or viewing the Chiropak II for your student/s please contact the Dobson's Uniform Shop at either campus. The Chiropak II will be retailing around \$98.00 and comes with a lifetime warranty.

*Negrini, S., & Carabalona, R (2002). Backpacks on! Schoolchildren's Perceptions of Load, Associations with Back Pain and Factors Determining the Load. Spine, 27(2), 187-195.

**Comparison of the posture of school children carrying backpacks versus pulling them on trolleys., Johanna Schmidt *, Sharon Docherty., Anglo-European College of Chiropractic, UK