

Back to school ergonomics

Question: My daughter seems to get back pain every year when first returning to school. Is there anything we can do to avoid this again?

Answer: The obvious first solution is a proper fitting backpack, which by now you have invested in. The not so obvious solution is taking a fresh observation of your child's classroom environment to assure it is ergonomically sound. This means evaluating all the positions and postures she will be required to be in throughout the day. Start from the beginning of the day and move forward hour by hour reviewing every action and position including sitting on the bus, to getting on and off the bus. Repetitive movement as well as seated positions effect proper spinal dynamics that can adversely effect your child's spine and lead to back discomfort. Are desk heights the correct height for your child? Do they encourage slouching over to write or read while at their desk, laptop or computer terminal? Are the seats at the desks supportive of their spinal curves and are the children utilizing the backs of the chairs to support their low back? How are the lunchroom ergonomics, gym class, etc.?

It is difficult enough with young children, getting them to maintain a healthy posture and stand up straight. Adolescent young women have a tendency to stand with their hands on their hips with one hip sticking out. Check out your daughter and her friends and observe how they all stand like this for hours at a time. Adolescent girls commonly have a posture of rounded shoulders as they get taller or develop in the chest.

Back to school means back to sports for many children. Proper training and stretching in preparation for their activity is imperative to minimize injury, which can later lead to back conditions.

Any persistent posture a child maintains that is asymmetrical or unusual should be checked by your chiropractor. Do not procrastinate or think these postures will disappear on their own. Your child develops in response to stresses on their spine and structure. We call this remodeling. In children this is important because these adjustments to poor posture can be permanent as growth centers change from soft cartilage to hard bone.

Early intervention with gentle chiropractic adjustments coupled with education on proper posture habits and maintenance of a safe ergonomically environment at home and school will assure your child a healthy physical growth period.

Quote of the week: *"The price of success is perseverance. The price of failure comes cheap."* – Anonymous