

Backpacks and Back Pain

From shoes and clothes to a list of school supplies the length of your arm, families are making their purchases for the new school year. While these things are important, finding the right back pack and using it wisely should also top your list. **Here are several tips on backpack safety:**

- ▲ Choose the right backpack: one with two wide, padded shoulder straps, a padded back, a waist strap, lightweight, or a rolling capability.
- ▲ Always use both shoulder straps when carrying the backpack. Wearing it on one shoulder may increase curvature of the spine.
- ▲ Tighten the straps to fit your body. Position the backpack two inches above your waist.
- ▲ Pack it lightly. Avoid overstuffing your backpack. The backpack shouldn't weigh more than 20 percent of the student's total weight.
- ▲ Organize the backpack by using the compartments and packing heavier items closer to the center of the back.
- ▲ Bring home only the books needed for homework. Avoid carrying CD players, CDs, video games, and other unnecessary items.
- ▲ When bending down with your backpack on, bend using both knees and your leg muscles.
- ▲ Build up the muscles in the back by doing strengthening exercises.



Safeguard Against Dog Bites



Whether it's a nip, bite, or actual attack, dog bites can be a serious problem. Statistics show that about 800,000 Americans have to seek medical attention each year for dog bites and half of these are children. **To reduce the risk of one of your family members being bitten, remember these tips from the Centers for Disease Control:**

- Ask a professional about suitable breeds of dogs that would be best for your family.
- Be sensitive to your children's fears. If they're afraid of dogs, delay getting one until they're older.
- Spend time with a dog before buying it or adopting it.
- Spay or neuter the dog before bringing it home.
- Avoid leaving a baby or young child alone with a dog.
- Don't play games with your dog that teach aggressive behaviors.
- Take your dog to an obedience class for training.
- Keep your dog healthy and its shots current.
- Avoid running by a strange dog. Dogs naturally like to chase and catch things.
- Don't disturb a dog that is caring for puppies, sleeping, or eating.
- If a strange dog approaches you, be very still and let it sniff you. Avoid sudden movements and stay calm.
- If you fall or are knocked to the ground by a dog, curl into a ball with your hands over your head and neck.

Be Cautious of Dehydration

Everyone loses body fluid daily through sweat, tears, urine and stool. In a healthy person, this fluid is replaced by drinking water and eating foods that contain water. However, when a person becomes so sick with fever, diarrhea, or vomiting or if they're overexposed to the sun, dehydration can occur. **The symptoms of dehydration may include:** • thirst • less-frequent urination • dry skin • fatigue • light-headedness • dizziness • confusion • dry mouth and mucous membranes • increased heart rate and breathing. **Children may also have these symptoms:** • dry mouth and tongue • no tears when crying • no wet diapers for more than three hours • sunken abdomen, eyes, or cheeks • high fever • listlessness • irritability • skin that doesn't flatten when pinched and released.

Drinking fluids is usually the best treatment for mild dehydration. It's better to have frequent, small amounts of

fluid (using a teaspoon or syringe for an infant or child) rather than trying to force large amounts of fluid at one time. Drinking too much fluid at once may actually cause more vomiting. Electrolyte solutions or freezer pops available in your pharmacy may also be effective.

To avoid dehydration this summer: • Drink plenty of fluids, especially when working or playing in the sun. • Make sure you're taking in more fluid than you're losing. • Try to schedule physical outdoor activities for the cooler parts of the day. • Drink appropriate sports drinks to help maintain electrolyte balance. • For infants and young children, use solutions that help maintain electrolyte balance during illness or heat exposure.

