



 SUBSCRIBE TO OUR NEWSLETTER AT <http://backsafe.com/newsroom.html>

Kids Backpack and Employee Sprain/Strain Fix

The end of summer is upon us and kids are starting back to school already. In a recent Sittingsafe® ergonomic workshop (our office training program designed to help office workers rid their bodies of pain and discomfort caused by computer and/or lab work) we also addressed basic lifting techniques for on and off the job activities. One woman remarked that she recently weighed her 12-year-old daughter's backpack and found that it was over 20 pounds!! This worried her as her daughter was in the midst of a growth spurt and wondered about the long-term health effects of lifting and carrying such a heavy load.



Studies show that kids carry 10-22% of their body weight in their backpacks. If you are a 150 lb. adult, imagine walking around all day carrying your golf bag or with a case of water on your back.

One study from the University of California, San Diego designed to measure the lumbar spine response to school backpack loads in healthy children concluded that increasing backpack loads significantly compress lumbar discs heights and that they are responsible for a significant amount of back pain in children.

A University of Michigan study found that 1/3 of children complain of back pain! You have to be kidding me! The only things I complained about as a child were rainy days and bad cafeteria food. Kids have the right to live, learn, and thrive without the inconvenience of dealing with back pain.

For that matter so do you! Do you know that F.I.T. discovered the keys to teaching people (yes, even your employees; yes, even 50 year olds; yes, even union members; and yes, even teenagers!) how to prevent costly and painful back injuries? Preventing sprain/strains of all descriptions, wrists, shoulders, back & neck, caused by cumulative trauma no longer have to ruin lives and cost companies tens of thousands of dollars.

We found out that people can't be "told" how to lift a box; transfer a patient; dig a ditch; pull a charged fire hose; or get in and out of a truck or bus; nor can they be "told" how to use their \$400 office chair or set up their \$3,000 workstation. Children can't be "told" how to lift their backpacks either. There are many things wrong with the prevailing methods used to "convince" employees not to injure themselves. However, running a video or having an "expert" preach about lifting with their legs is an exercise in wasting time, production and payroll dollars. We discovered that in order to have a long lasting change in physical behavior they have to FEEL how to do it.

The Backsafe® and Sittingsafe® training workshops all include a customized, practical component designed to cause "Wow - now I understand!" moments. In the absence of having your children in front of one of our Backsafe® trainers, here are a few tips on how to help your kids to keep their backs in prime working condition, for life!

The first thing I suggest is to make the subject of protecting their backs important to them. If you go right into teaching techniques of how to lift & wear the backpack correctly it just might not be considered important enough for them to listen. One of the things we noticed about teaching kids and employees is that the training must be considered valuable to the "student." It is virtually impossible to constructively teach disinterested students (If you had my fifth grade teacher you would intimately know that).

I would suggest asking them if they know any kids who have hurt their backs and how it may have affected the child's life. If not, what about adults that they may know who suffer from back pain? The main gist of the conversation is to get the child to understand that back injuries could alter their lives considerably not to speak of the brain numbing pain. You want the child to be "interested" in learning how they can prevent a painful injury from happening to them. Without a personal benefit your lesson will be a waste of time.

Next, discuss the function of the spine to the child and the fact that the spine dislikes twisting more than anything else. I would focus on just this one point to start so not to make things too complicated and give them too many things to focus on.

Ask the child to put their backpack on (have some weight in it but not a full load) as they normally do and point out any twisting motion so that they can isolate and FEEL this "at risk" behavior. Remember if they don't know WHY they shouldn't twist this datum of "don't twist while lifting" will be meaningless.

Next work out ways they can put on and take off the backpack without twisting at the waist while doing so.

A good suggestion is to first place the backpack at waist height on a desk or table to relieve the weight of the load and then slide arms into the backpack. The key is to not twist. Have your child practice putting it on and taking it off in ways that are comfortable for them yet doing so without twisting.

Other key issues include common sense discussion such as only packing things one needs, pack heavier objects in the bottom, and try to keep the weight equally distributed across the backpack.

A key to F.I.T.'s success in significantly reducing sprain/strain claims is we don't PREACH to employees on how to lift, sit, bend, pull, push, or set up their workstations. You can't force someone to have a realization!!! You must present information in a format that leads employees to have their own self-determined "Aha, I never knew that. I am not going to do THAT again" experience.

Over the last 17 years and after training hundreds of thousands of employees F.I.T. has learned how to get employees to bring their minds AND their bodies into our training workshops. It is a precious art to get employees (and kids) to listen and buy-in to wanting to change their physical behavior to prevent back injuries and other sprains/strains. Your employees are extremely eager to know how to avoid painful injuries. That is not an issue. A large union based transportation company just discovered that too. After training the first 100 drivers, the biggest complaint that these union drivers had was that the training was TOO SHORT.

If you have ever had trouble getting your employees to comply with injury prevention training we know why and that is our specialty. It is a wonderful thing to have healthy employees. How wonderful? Evaluate how much money your company has spent on sprain/strain claims over the last three years. Now imagine a large portion of that hard-earned money **not being** spent to fix-up employees, but going to profit and bonuses instead. Happy employees, happy executives and happy shareholders.

I'm always available to answer questions about our programs. If you need more help with your child's backpack issues I can ask one of our 1,000 Injury Prevention Specialists throughout the U.S. and Canada to help.

Dennis Downing, President
Future Industrial Technologies

Check out our new blog: www.backsafe.wordpress.com. Any injury prevention/safety type topics you'd like to see covered there? Please let us know. We love suggestions and feedback.

We look forward to helping you to "Prevent Tomorrow's Injuries Today," right now!

We're TWITTERing! Keep current on the latest in injury prevention by following us. Find "backsafe" at www.twitter.com/backsafe! Find us on Facebook too!

This article may be reprinted in its entirety provided that the following resource is left intact:

Dennis Downing is the founder and President of Future Industrial Technologies, Inc., a nationwide Industrial Injury Prevention Training Company. It specializes in improving conditions at work and in life by utilizing the proprietary injury prevention programs, BACKSAFE® and SITTINGSAFE®, that have proven to be highly successful at reducing workers comp costs within companies of all sizes and descriptions.

Future Industrial Technologies, Inc.
4930 Cervato Way
Santa Barbara, CA 93111
Call Toll Free: 1 (800) 775-2225
Tel: (805) 967-2485
Fax: (805) 967-2487
Email: info@backsafe.com
<http://www.backsafe.com>