

Orthopaedic Observations

A Matter of Medicine...

TM Pending

Back to School Tips

By Shirvinda Wijesekera, M.D.

Backpack Safety



The season is upon us, and children are heading back to school with backpacks at the ready. *Each year there are plenty of children at the doctor's office complaining of back pain related to their backpacks.* Backpacks are a reality of school and are a great way to carry the day's necessities. Here are a

few general guidelines.

1. **Choose a backpack that is correctly sized for the child.**
2. Use both straps to better distribute the weight evenly.
3. Keep the straps snug and use the waist strap if available.
4. **Organize the load.** Keep the heaviest and largest items closest to the back.
5. Lift correctly, and bend at the knees.
6. **Carry what is needed,** leave extras at home or at school.

Parents can help manage backpack associated back pain.

1. **Watch their posture** and what is being loaded into the backpack.
2. **Encourage kids to tell you about pain caused by the backpack,** especially numbness or tingling in the arms or legs.
3. There is no accurate rule to limit the weight carried, **but loads under 10-15% of the child's body weight is a reasonable guideline.**



Scoliosis Screening

Scoliosis is a curvature of the spine that can affect school age children, girls more than boys. The curvature might become apparent during periods of rapid growth. School screening by the school nurse might find prominence of the ribs during "**Forward Bending Screen.**" *Kids are asked to reach for their toes, an asymmetry of the ribs might suggest a closer look for scoliosis is due.* Signs to watch for:

1. Rib cage asymmetry.
2. Shoulder inequality.
3. Waistline asymmetry.
4. Curvature to the spine during periods of rapid growth.

• We at the Orthopaedic Group hope that these few tips will make the return back to school smooth and painless. If you need further tips on how to better manage this orthopaedic problem, **please contact us to schedule a full spine examination at:**

- (203) 865-6784 scheduling dept
- (203) 865-6788 or fax referrals

Dr. Wijesekera is an Orthopaedic Spinal Surgeon who specializes in adult and pediatric spinal surgery, spinal deformity and spinal trauma. He attended Boston University for his undergraduate studies. After

(Dr. Wijesekera's bio continued on back side of pg.)

graduating Alpha Omega Alpha from Boston University School of Medicine, he traveled to the University of Southern California - Los Angeles Medical Center where he completed his residency in Orthopaedic Surgery. At the University of Southern California - Los Angeles Medical Center he was awarded the Marshall Schiff Award and Herman Epstein Award. Dr. Wijesekera specialized in Spinal Surgery at the University of California Davis Medical Center, where he completed fellowship training in all aspects of adult and pediatric spinal surgery.

He joined The Orthopaedic Group, LLC in New Haven, Connecticut in September 2004 and has brought spinal surgery expertise to a well rounded and equipped practice of orthopaedic surgeons. In December of 2011, Dr. Wijesekera, completed a medical mission to Hanoi, North Vietnam where he operated on and treated numerous challenging and difficult spine cases for the local Vietnamese population. His practice continues to expand and he enjoys treating spine patients of all ages...



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