

Is Your Bag putting a strain on Your Spine?

As spinal health care experts, chiropractors in the [United Chiropractic Association](#) are working to educate the community during Spinal Awareness Week. Their main focus is on how you can ensure that your spine and nervous system are working optimally and how to prevent injury and chronic problems through daily activities.

As modern life has become busier most of us have started carrying more in our bags and purses. Even our children are carrying more in their school bags than ever before. Carrying a heavy load can adversely affect our spine and nervous system – resulting in reduced health and can be a pain in the neck – and shoulders, and back! Whether you are carrying a laptop, a sports bag, purse, or rucksack knowing how to correctly load, lift and wear your bag can go a long way to preventing injury to your spine and nervous system.



A heavy load that is unevenly or improperly distributed can cause postural imbalances, spinal misalignments (vertebral subluxation), muscle strain, headaches, back, neck and arm pain – even nerve damage. For example, a heavy bag carried on one shoulder causes the spine and muscles to compensate for the uneven weight. This places stress on the spine and nervous system, and may lead to reduced health and pain.

Choosing a Bag

- Choose a bag made of lightweight material (vinyl or canvas is lighter than leather)
- Look for a bag with multiple pockets rather than one big pocket so that you can distribute the weight of the bag's contents
- Shoulder straps should be wide, adjustable and padded if possible
- Choose shoulder bags and rucksacks that are proportionate to your body size and are not larger than needed

Packing a Bag

- Pack light! Your bag should not weigh more than 10-15% of your body weight
- Pack the heaviest items at the bottom of your bag
- If you are unable to pack light, use more than one bag so that you can distribute the weight you are carrying

Carrying a Bag

- Use both shoulder straps when carrying a rucksack
- For bags with a single shoulder strap, lift the strap over the head to rest the strap on the shoulder opposite to the side to the bag. This helps to distribute the weight more evenly.
- Alternate shoulders regularly to avoid undue strain on one side of the body
- For rucksacks ensure that the straps are positioned so that the bag sits above the waist to reduce pressure on the spine and nervous system
- Focus on your posture. Walk upright and don't slouch—this will help keep your body balanced, despite carrying a heavy load.

If you are interested in finding out more information on how you can improve your spinal health, posture and overall wellbeing please contact your local United Chiropractic Association Chiropractor.