



Backpack Can Be Back Pain Time Bomb

By Tony Garrow, D.C.



With the start of the new school year comes new books, supplies, backpacks... and back pain. That's right, back pain. Loading up a child's back with a heavy backpack can cause headaches, shoulder and lower back pain, and have a serious effect on

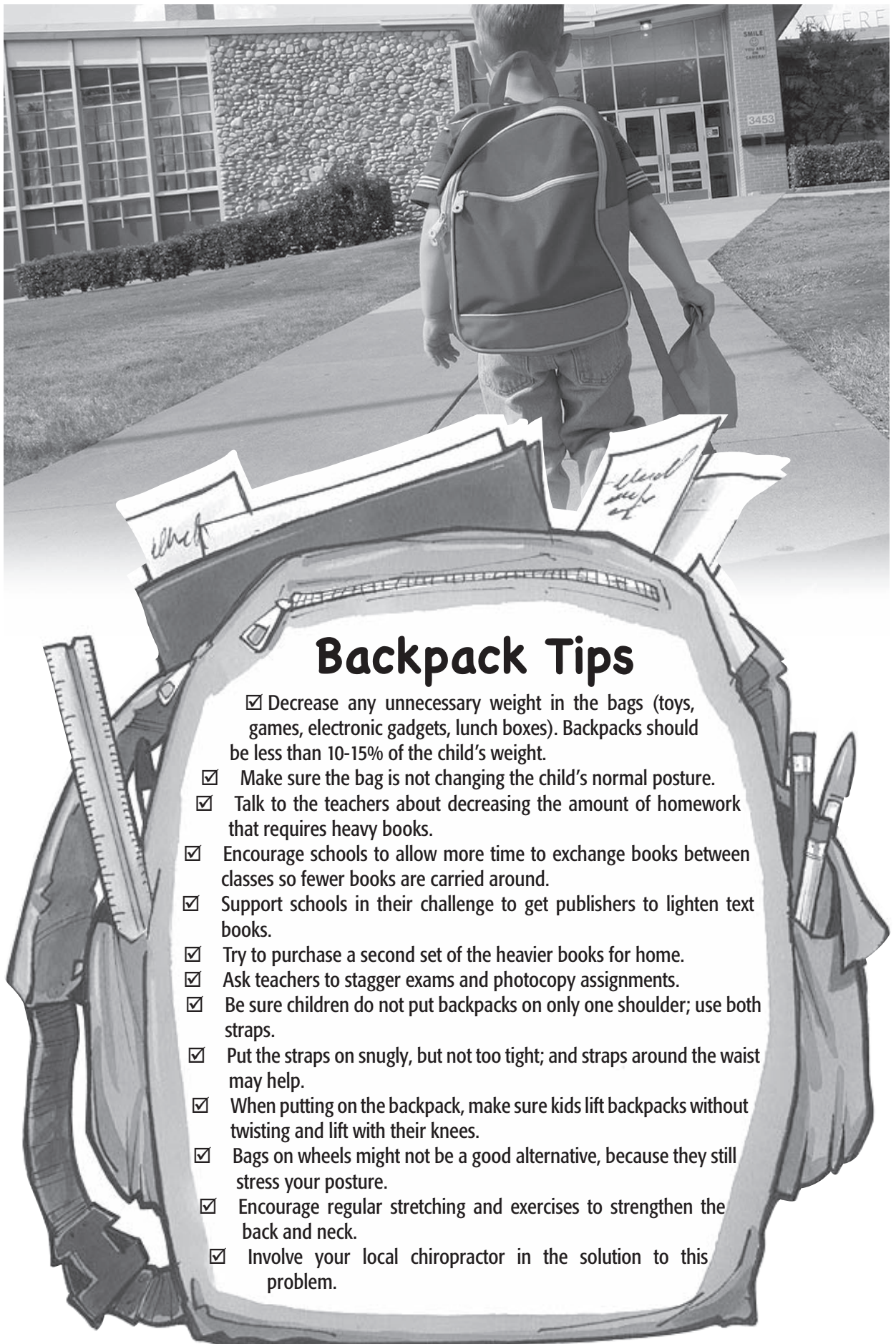
kids' posture, spine, and health. Over time, heavy backpacks may also contribute to chronic health problems later in life.

Recently, it was reported in the medical journal *Spine* that more than 50% of kids will experience low back pain by the end of their teen years. Much of this can be caused by backpacks. Another *Spine* article showed that heavy backpacks alter the discs between the bones in the spine, which may set the kids up for osteoarthritis and disc problems later in life.

With books getting bigger and kids laden with today's electronic must-haves, it's more important than ever to take a few easy steps to ensure your child's backpack isn't a back pain time bomb.

Finding a chiropractor who specializes in children and their posture, can be a huge asset. I see a lot of children who have serious posture problems and spinal misalignments due to backpack stress. When caught early, I am often able to correct the problem, resulting in a healthy, happy childhood.

Dr. Tony Garrow of Garrow Family Chiropractic practices in Wall Township and focuses on improving the overall health of your family. He also lectures about many health-related subjects throughout Monmouth County. Dr. Garrow is available to speak at school and parents' groups to help educate parents and school officials, and develop solutions to the backpack dilemma. He can also check the children's stance with and without the backpacks to see if the backpacks have affected their posture. To have Dr. Garrow speak before your group, call 732-223-1990 and check out garrowchiropractic.com



Backpack Tips

- Decrease any unnecessary weight in the bags (toys, games, electronic gadgets, lunch boxes). Backpacks should be less than 10-15% of the child's weight.
- Make sure the bag is not changing the child's normal posture.
- Talk to the teachers about decreasing the amount of homework that requires heavy books.
- Encourage schools to allow more time to exchange books between classes so fewer books are carried around.
- Support schools in their challenge to get publishers to lighten text books.
- Try to purchase a second set of the heavier books for home.
- Ask teachers to stagger exams and photocopy assignments.
- Be sure children do not put backpacks on only one shoulder; use both straps.
- Put the straps on snugly, but not too tight; and straps around the waist may help.
- When putting on the backpack, make sure kids lift backpacks without twisting and lift with their knees.
- Bags on wheels might not be a good alternative, because they still stress your posture.
- Encourage regular stretching and exercises to strengthen the back and neck.
- Involve your local chiropractor in the solution to this problem.