

Pack it Light. Wear it Right *on the go.*

Carrying a heavy load can be a pain in the neck — and the shoulders, and the back. Whether you're toting your laptop, a sports bag, luggage for a trip, or a simple handbag, knowing how to choose, load, lift and wear your bag can go a long way to prevent pain and unnecessary injury.

Ontario's chiropractors weigh in

A heavy load that is unevenly or improperly distributed can cause muscle strain, headaches, back, neck and arm pain — even nerve damage. For instance, a heavy bag carried on one shoulder forces the muscles and spine to compensate for the uneven weight. This places stress on the mid and lower back, and may cause chronic problems.

Injuries resulting from improper lifting and carrying of a heavy load can become chronic and can impact your quality of life. If you experience pain that lasts more than two or three days, call your chiropractor for an evaluation. To find a chiropractor near you, go to www.chiropractic.on.ca.

According to Health Canada, 80 per cent of Canadians will suffer from back pain in their lifetimes.

As spinal health care experts, Ontario's chiropractors are working to educate adults on some simple strategies to help injuries caused by carrying heavy bags.

No matter what kind of bag you're shopping for, the same general principles apply:

Choosing a bag

- Choose a bag made of lightweight material (vinyl or canvas, instead of leather).
- Look for bags with multiple pockets, rather than a single large compartment — this can help you to distribute the weight of the bag's contents.
- Shoulder straps should be wide, adjustable and padded, if possible. Poorly designed shoulder straps can dig deep into the muscles and put strain on the nerves.



- For large bags, such as suitcases or laptop bags, select a model with wheels.
- For shoulder bags or backpacks, choose a bag that is proportionate to your body size and that is not larger than needed.

Packing a bag

- Plan to pack light — resist the urge to carry everything with you. Your bag should not weigh more than 10 to 15 per cent of your body weight.
- Pack the heaviest items at the bottom of the bag.
- Make efficient use of the pockets of your bag to evenly distribute the weight of the contents.
- If you can't pack light, it's best to pack items into several bags, rather than overstuff a single bag.
- For some specialized sports, such as rock climbing, balance is an important consideration when packing. Consult an expert in the sport to ensure you pack it right.



Carrying a bag

- A good backpack is designed to evenly distribute weight, but it's important to use both shoulder straps.
- A backpack should never be worn over one shoulder.
- For bags with a single shoulder strap, lift the strap over the head to rest it on the opposite side of the handbag or briefcase. This can help to distribute weight more evenly.
- Be sure to alternate shoulders frequently to avoid undue strain.
- For luggage or laptop bags, whenever possible, make use of wheels to pull, rather than carry, your load.



What is a chiropractor?

Chiropractors are spinal health care experts who are regulated primary health care providers, like medical doctors, dentists and optometrists. This means they can see you without a referral from another health care provider.

In Canada, chiropractors are required to complete a minimum of three years of university, followed by four intensive years of training at an accredited chiropractic college.

What is chiropractic?

One of the largest primary-contact health care professions in Ontario, chiropractic is a non-invasive, hands-on health care discipline that focuses on the musculoskeletal system.

Chiropractors most commonly practice a manual approach, and provide diagnosis, treatment and preventative care for disorders related to the spine, pelvis, nervous system and joints.

For many conditions, such as lower back pain, chiropractic care is frequently the primary method of treatment and, where other conditions exist, chiropractic care may complement or support medical treatment by relieving the musculoskeletal aspects associated with the condition.

Ten tips for maintaining a healthy back

- Exercise regularly
- Follow a healthy diet
- Maintain good posture
- Stretch your spine before and after sports
- Don't overload your backpack or shoulder bag
- Stretch your legs and back after each hour of sitting
- Never cradle the phone between your neck and shoulder
- Sleep on your back or side, not on your stomach
- Invest in a good chair, pillow and mattress
- Have regular spinal check-ups



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Treatment That Stands Up.

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Ontario Chiropractic Association