

September 2017

# Asset HealthTalk

Keeping your health and wellbeing in the know

## Your Child's Backpack MAY BE PACKING ON HEALTH PROBLEMS

Did you know your child's backpack can have long-term health implications? When a child carries too much weight while they're developing, it can affect their posture, compress their spine and impair growth. By being mindful of the weight of your child's backpack, along with its fit, you can help prevent musculoskeletal conditions that could last into adulthood.

The general guideline is your child's backpack shouldn't weigh more than 10 percent of their body weight. Unfortunately, over half of students carry a bag larger than this recommendation. Heavy packs can lead to falls and contribute to spinal injuries. As a result, thousands of children every year are treated for backpack-related injuries. In addition to the weight of the pack, how it is worn matters. The pack should rest snugly on the back instead of hanging down. The top of the backpack should be two inches below the shoulder blades and the bottom should come to the waist or slightly above. It should not extend past the shoulders or lower than the top of your child's hipbones.

### TIPS FOR LIGHTENING YOUR CHILD'S LOAD

- Limit what your child carries to and from school to minimize the weight of their backpack. Old assignments and other unnecessary items should be left out. For example, there's no need to send your child to school with a full water bottle when they can fill it once they get to school.
- If your child has to carry a heavy pack on a regular basis, consider a rolling backpack if they're allowed at your child's school. If their load is particularly heavy one day, they can carry some items in their hands to reduce the strain on their back.
- Choose backpacks based on fit rather than the color or design. Opt for one with padded shoulder straps. The pack should also have a chest strap and a waist belt to distribute weight evenly.
- Backpacks should be worn on both shoulders, rather than slung over one.
- Load backpacks with the heaviest items to the back. Utilize various compartments and pockets to distribute weight.
- Encourage your child to pick up their pack by bending at their knees rather than their waist.

"Your Kid's Gigantic Backpack Is a Health Risk," Markham Heid, time.com, Aug. 21, 2015.

"Backpack Facts: What's All the Flap About?" aota.org, accessed Aug. 5, 2017.

"1, 2, 3's of Basic Backpack Wearing," aota.org, accessed Aug. 5, 2017.

# Flow Like a Pro with Yin Yoga

Yin yoga is a method that focuses on relaxing and restoring the body by holding poses for longer periods of time. Props are often used to support the body in various poses, such as bolsters, blankets and blocks.

Some of the benefits of a regular Yin yoga practice are:

- Increased mobility and flexibility
- Reduced stress and anxiety levels
- Improved circulation
- Greater stamina

*"Where the mind goes, the body follows."*

## Four Yin Yoga Poses for Beginner Yogis

Hold each pose for at least 45 seconds, if it is comfortable for your body to do so.

### Butterfly Pose

- Begin by sitting up tall and bringing the soles of your feet together.
- Slide your heels out, based on your comfort level, and let your knees fall out to either side.
- Inhale deeply. As you exhale, allow your spine to round forward and your head to drop closer to your feet as you walk your hands forward.
- As soon as you find the first sensation of tension, pause and hold there.



### Reclining Twist

- To begin, lie on your back and hug your knees into your chest.
- Drop your arms out to your sides so your body forms a "T" shape. Keep your palms facing up.
- Lower your bent knees all the way over to your right side and look over your left shoulder.
- Repeat on the other side.



### Child's Pose

- Kneel on your mat and sit back with your feet tucked under your bottom. Exhale and lower your hips and forehead toward the floor.
- Keep your knees together or, if it's more comfortable for you, spread your knees slightly apart and allow your body to completely relax.



### Savasana

- Lie flat on your back and rest your arms out to the side, palms up.
- Breathe deep into your belly and stay here for five to 30 minutes.
- To exit the pose, first begin by deepening your breath. Bring gentle movement and awareness back to your body, wiggle your fingers and toes. Roll to your right side and rest there for a moment before getting on with your day.



## Transforming Micro Habits Into Daily Routines

BJ Fogg, a Stanford professor, suggests that we don't have to get entangled in taking huge actions in order to achieve our goals. Instead, he recommends small, but measurable shifts that, one by one, build up to our bigger goals over time. These are known as micro habits, which are really just small steps toward starting something new.

This idea doesn't depend on the traditional methods we tend to tap into (such as willpower, unrealistic goal setting, guilt, etc.). Imagine the capacity to efficiently and sustainably change your habits with skill and practice, and without guilt or temporary motivation. What would you incorporate into your daily life? Would you exercise more, budget better, or even spend more time with your family?

Because they are easy and prevent you from making excuses, micro habits really work. To develop a micro habit, choose something you want to learn or change and incorporate it into your current routine, like eating breakfast. This establishes the "trigger, craving, reward" cycle. You'll start doing it without thinking about it once it becomes part of your routine – just like brushing your teeth.

### Here are some examples of micro habits:

- Have one less serving of caffeine a day.
- Write a thank you note once each week.
- Sit in silence for a few minutes every day.
- Eat one more serving of fruits and vegetables each day.
- Drink a glass of water daily first thing in the morning.
- Stand up and stretch every hour on the hour every day.
- Start by taking a jog around your block once daily instead of attempting a full mile.
- Turn off all notifications daily for at least one long block of work time.



It all starts with tiny steps versus just taking one large step at a time, and once a micro habit is established, it can develop from there.

"Use Micro Habits to Tackle Big Health and Productivity Goals," Julie Compton, nbcnews.com, June 1, 2017.

"The Power Of Small Tweaks And Tiny Habits," Bonnie St. John, huffingtonpost.com, Sept. 19, 2016.

"25 Tiny Habits That Could Totally Change Your Life," Annie Mueller, lifehack.org, accessed Aug. 15, 2017.

"5 Yin Yoga Poses for Beginner Yogis," Kari-Ann Levine, yogiapproved.com, Aug. 3, 2017.

"10 Reasons to Make Time for Yin Yoga When You're Too Busy," Shannon Stephens, yogajournal.com, Aug. 14, 2017.