

Back 2 School Tips

Backpacks

- ❖ Proper fit:
 - Backpacks should be no wider or longer than the child's torso
 - Should have 2 x padded shoulder straps - extra points for waist or chest strap!
 - Multiple compartments to help distribute the weight evenly
 - Lightweight material
 - When full - it should not exceed 10-15% of the child's body weight ie; 37kg child = max 5kg backpack (remember that wet togs and towel weigh more than dry ones!)
 - If your child is walking to school or home, add reflective material for extra visibility and safety.
- ❖ "Healthy" backpack habits
 - Inspect your child's backpack regularly and remove unneeded items
 - Load backpack weight evenly
 - Periodically refit straps to make sure they have not slipped over time
 - Encourage them to put BOTH straps on everytime they wear their backpack rather than slinging over one shoulder and running off!

Posture

- ❖ Normal head weight for a child is around 5kg - when ears are stacked over the shoulders and heels.
 - With as little as 60 degree flexion, this can translate to a weight impact increase to 27kg! Of course, the head doesn't suddenly weigh more, but the pressure changes dramatically.
 - Think of holding a 5kg weight close to your body. Now hold that 5kg weight with one arm as far away from your body as you can - it feels SO much heavier right?
- ❖ Posture can change your hormones!
 - Poor posture - shoulders forward, neck slouched, body language small - can actually cause a lack of confidence, low mood and a marked change in testosterone and cortisol
 - It can take just 2-3 minutes of standing up straight with arms outstretched to decrease cortisol (stress hormone) and increase testosterone.

- ❖ Pain in childhood leads to pain in adulthood - if your child mentions back pain now and nothing changes - guess what? Yes, pain as an adult.

Barefoot or Shoes

- ❖ Do your kids kick their shoes off as soon as they can when they get home?
 - Kids are innately intelligent. Feet need to be on the ground in order to activate the many proprioceptors that help us to find and maintain our balance. By putting feet in shoes with 'support', we don't allow the body to receive the correct signals
 - If your school insists on shoes being worn, consider a 'barefoot' type shoe (Vivo has an excellent range) - that allows the foot to flex and stretch, strengthening muscles and allowing the body to do what it is designed to do. Move freely!

Screens and Devices

- ❖ They're here to stay - and it's the way of the future.
 - Holding devices sitting down, heads tilted and shoulders rounded - stretches the muscles, ligaments and tendons in the neck and upper back
 - Ask the child to lie on their stomach with tablet propped up in front of them
 - Lie on back with holding the phone above their head and at eye level
 - Consider purchasing a tablet/phone holder stand
 - Take regular stretching breaks - much like the Health & Safety office exercises!
 - Set an alarm on the device to alert every 15 minutes
 - When the alarm sounds, do quick exercises - stretch arms above the head and move neck - 3x left, then right, then up and down
 - Blue Light Filter and early switch off for better sleep
 - Putting blue light filter on, or investing in some glasses will help regulate our 'normal' sleep cycle by not interfering with the body's natural rhythm of creating melatonin.
 - Try to set a rule that devices are off 1 hour before bedtime, and turn house lights off 30 minutes before bed. If your child is afraid of the dark, consider a soft salt lamp light