

BACKPACK SHOPPING 101: How to Choose a Backpack

Picking out a new backpack can be one of the easiest tasks to check off your back to school shopping list. With a little extra attention to detail you can be sure that the pack not only allows some personality to shine through, but that it also fits properly to minimize back strain and pain. Follow our study guide below to be sure your choice is at the top of the class:

STRAPS

Look for two wide, well-padded and adjustable shoulder straps. This will allow the weight of the pack to be distributed evenly across the shoulders and allow for readjustment during wear. A sternum or waist strap option is also helpful to keep the pack in place.

COMPARTMENTS

Multiple compartments are great because they not only allow for better organization, but they also help distribute the weight of the pack, so it's not focused on one area of the back. Pro tip – place the heaviest items closest to the back.

SIZE + WEIGHT

Backpacks come in different sizes and it's important to make sure the size you choose is proportional to your child's size. The pack shouldn't fall below the hip bones and it should fit snug within the natural curvature of the back. This will keep everything near the center of gravity for the most comfortable fit. The maximum weight when packed should not exceed 15-20% of your child's total body weight.



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ON YOUR MARK, GET SET, GO! IT'S BACK TO SCHOOL TIME!

Back to school time has arrived and here at Spine Institute of Central Florida we're ready to help you navigate through this busy time of year! In this edition we will cover tips on choosing the right backpack for your child's spine health, a quick and nutritious (kid approved!!) dinner recipe, healthy snacking options and more.

Before we jump in to the back to school fun, we'd like to welcome you to our very first patient newsletter! Our goal for this publication is to keep you up to date with happenings at Spine Institute of Central Florida (SICF) as well as to provide you with information, tips and tricks to help you live your best life, every day.

Now let's get back to the subject – a new school year is upon us and the first bell will be ringing soon. This means lazy summer mornings will quickly turn into crazy school days, but there are some things you can do to make the transition smoother for all involved.

A good place to start is the bedtime routine. Go ahead and begin easing into those earlier bedtimes so earlier wake times won't be so tough. You can also help your kiddos get back into the routine by having them choose and lay clothes out before bed. This next day time saver can make a big difference on busy mornings and help avoid those "I can't find my *insert missing article of clothing here!*" moments of panic. Once school is back in session, be sure they also gather up books and supplies used for homework and pack backpacks before bed. No one should have to locate a missing math book before 7:00 AM. Speaking of homework, it's important to have an area designated specifically for it. It will help reinforce that it is a priority and help foster good study habits.

Give these tips a try while you enjoy the last days of summer break. We hope those summer reading lists are complete and that you and your children have the best school year yet!

A Word from Our President and Medical Director

Welcome and thank you for choosing Spine Institute of Central Florida for your spine health and orthopaedic needs. We are committed and passionate about providing the most comprehensive care to our wonderful community.

Backpack Safety for Returning Students



In our latest Ask the Doctor segment, Dr. Okafor shares some important tips for back to school spine health.

Taking preventative measures can help prevent serious pain and strain.

To find this video as well as more "Ask the Doctor" videos, stop by our Facebook page!

www.facebook.com/SpineInstituteFL



Meet Chukwuka C. Okafor, MD, MBA, CIME, FAAOS who is not only a Spine Surgeon here at Spine Institute of Central Florida, but also our Founder, President and Medical Director! Dr. Okafor is Board Certified by the American Board of Orthopaedic Surgery and is Fellowship Trained in Complex and Minimally Invasive Spinal Surgery. He is also a Board Certified Independent Medical Examiner. Dr. Okafor earned his BS in Biochemistry from the University of Massachusetts and his MD from Boston University School of Medicine. He also earned his MBA from American University (Kogod) School of Business.

Dr. Okafor founded the practice in 2010 and with much hard work and dedication has experienced tremendous growth over the last eight years. Spine Institute of Central Florida is a Comprehensive Spine Surgery & Pain

Provider Spotlight

In each edition we want to give our readers a chance to learn more about our providers here at Spine Institute of Central Florida. For our inaugural edition we would like to introduce you to Dr. Chukwuka C. Okafor and his team. Check out future editions for more information!

Management Center of Excellence offering treatments for ALL surgical and non-surgical disorders of the spine, from the simple to the most complex.

Because all spinal problems and injuries are not the same, Dr. Okafor ensures that the most effective approach is used by determining the treatment plan based on each patient's individual pathology and symptoms. He never tries a one-size-fits-all approach as he believes that every problem has its own unique solution.

"Offering treatments for ALL surgical and non-surgical disorders of the spine, from the simple to the most complex."

A typical day for Dr. Okafor varies depending on his schedule. It can include anything from performing multiple surgeries in the operating room all day, to working closely with his team to diagnose and setup

treatment plans for patients or seeing patients in the office for injections and procedures.

Meet the Team

German Marulanda, MD
Fellowship Trained Orthopaedic Spine Surgeon

Maria R. Otero-Suria, MD, Psy.D, MPH
Licensed Clinical Psychologist

Stacy Dale Russell, DPT
Doctor of Physical Therapy

Stephen Lagor, DPT
Doctor of Physical Therapy

Kyle Merritt, PA-C
Physician Assistant

Caitlin Thomas, PA-C
Physician Assistant

Kala Young, PA-C
Physician Assistant

Brenda Giles, DNP
Doctor of Nursing Practice

Patrick Horrell, ARNP-C
Advanced Registered Nurse Practitioner

Lupe Guerra, PA-C
Physician Assistant

Loreta Araoz-Soler, PTA
Physical Therapy Assistant

Clerissa Honiker, PTA
Physical Therapy Assistant



Healthy Habits

Take back control of your health with a few simple changes in your routine.

We get it. You're busy! After working all day, picking up the kids and finally getting back home, sometimes the easiest option to get everyone fed isn't always the healthiest. And exercise? Ummm, yeah. But you don't have to resort to takeout and crashing on the couch in front of the TV. Try making a quick and nutritious ham and cheese pizza (recipe on the right) that the kids will love and that will leave enough time for an evening walk with the family. Or grab your favorite bagged salad and a rotisserie chicken to have dinner on

the table in a snap, leaving time for a family swim while soaking up these summer evenings. Kids bored on the weekend? Load up for a trip to the local park and a bike ride followed by a picnic lunch with extra veggies on the subs and your favorite fruit for desert. Making an effort to eat healthier and getting in some exercise, even just a few times a week, can make a big difference in your health!

In addition to eating right and exercising, drinking plenty of water and getting enough sleep at night are two other important things you can do for better health. Water requirements depend on the individual, but it's commonly

recommended to aim for the 8 x 8 rule - drinking eight, 8 oz glasses of water per day - when it comes to water consumption. Drinking plenty of water can help you feel fuller, lead to decreased calorie intake and boost your metabolic rate. As for sleep, consistently getting less than the recommended 7 to 9 hours per night has been linked to weight gain and a weakened immune system among other things. Your body heals itself and restores chemical balance during sleep so it's important to ensure you're getting enough shut-eye.

Consistency is key, so make a better health plan and stick to it. You'll see the benefits in no time!

Healthy Snack Ideas

Do you love to snack, but feel guilty reaching for the potato chips? Are your kids starving when they get home from school and you'd prefer to avoid passing them the bag? If so, you're in luck! Check out our list of favorite snacks that taste good and are good for you:

- Apple Slices with Almond Butter
- Celery with Cream Cheese or Peanut Butter
- Baked Pears with Walnuts & Honey
- Mixed Nuts
- Plain Greek Yogurt & Mixed Berries
- Sliced Pears with Ricotta Cheese
- Popcorn topped with Parmesan Cheese

- Grilled Cheese made with Whole Grain Bread & Thinly Sliced Apple Added
- Sliced Turkey Breast & Pickle Roll-Ups
- Crunchy Roasted Chickpeas
- Veggies dipped in Hummus
- Low Fat Ham & Cheese Roll-Ups
- Sweet Potato Toast
- Pears topped with Plain Greek Yogurt & Honey
- Edamame
- Cheese Stick Paired with Veggies or Fruit
- Cantaloupe Slices wrapped in Prosciutto
- Whole Grain Toast topped with Almond Butter & Sliced Peach
- Cottage Cheese topped with Pineapple Chunks
- Baked Apple Chips

KID APPROVED

Weeknight Dinner Recipe – Ham & Cheese Pizza

Reinvent a classic sandwich as a cheesy pizza. Sweet, crisp Fuji apple provides a great balance to the rich, gooey cheese and savory ham, and everyone knows there's no better place to slip in some extra leafy greens than on a pizza.

Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon olive oil, divided
- 4 ounces fresh baby spinach
- 1 (8-oz.) prebaked thin pizza crust
- 1/4 cup lower-sodium marinara sauce
- 4 ounces lower-sodium deli ham, diced
- 2 ounces shredded reduced-fat cheddar cheese (about 1/2 cup)
- 2 ounces fresh mozzarella cheese, torn
- 1/2 cup julienne-cut Fuji apple
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon crushed red pepper

How to Make It:

Step 1

Preheat oven to 500°F.

Step 2

Heat 1 teaspoon oil in a large skillet over medium-high. Add spinach; cook 3 minutes or until completely wilted, stirring frequently. Remove from heat.

Step 3

Place pizza crust on a sheet of parchment paper; spread marinara sauce evenly over crust. Arrange spinach, ham, cheddar, and mozzarella evenly over sauce. Place pizza on parchment directly on oven rack; bake at 500°F for 9 minutes or until cheese melts and begins to brown. Remove from oven. Top with apple and peppers; drizzle with remaining 2 teaspoons oil. Cut into 8 wedges.

Screen Time and Your Childs Posture

Mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets have become a daily part of life for most folks these days and kids are no exception. These devices allow us to keep in touch with friends and family, provide a source of entertainment and put the power of the internet at our fingertips. The start of a new school year can mean increased screen time for your children if they also use their devices to study and do homework.

Have you ever noticed your child hunched over a device and wondered what it might be doing to their posture? Prolonged screen time can take a toll on posture and lead to neck and back pain. The good news is that there are some steps you can take to encourage better screen time posture and help reduce the onset of problems.



Avoid letting your children study in the bed and remind them that the bed is for sleeping. Have them sit up straight, preferably at a desk or kitchen table, with an elevated stand to place the device at eye level. This will help avoid forward head and neck positions that happen when looking down at a device and cause strain on the spine. Teach your children to stretch regularly while sitting. Raising your arms over your head and stretching like you're yawning can reset posture. Regular exercise breaks away from the device should also be encouraged. A bonus is that short exercise breaks have also been shown to increase students' attention and ability to retain information. Lastly, remember to set a good example for your children by following the same set of rules when it comes to screen time. Your spine will thank you!

Featured Patient Testimonials



Paul Swenson shares his story about how Dr. Okafor at the Spine Institute of Central Florida was able to take care of his back pain after previous failed attempts from other doctors.



9 years ago Thomas Farris was diagnosed with severe kyphosis.

He shares his amazing improvements in his quality of life he's experienced since his surgery with Dr. Okafor.

Visit us on Facebook to hear these amazing stories and many more shared by our wonderful patients. To be featured in our newsletter, ask the front desk how you can we can help you share your own experience!

Straight Up

Your Mom was right, you should sit up straight. Good posture isn't just about how you look. It is important to your long-term health.

Posture is how you hold your body and holding your body correctly helps keep the back and spine healthy. Good posture basically means that you are keeping each part of the body in line with neighboring parts to maintain the three natural curves of the spine. When practicing proper posture while standing, you should be able to draw an imaginary line from your earlobe, through your shoulder, hip, knee and down to the middle of your ankle. It's important to maintain good posture whether you are moving, standing or sitting still and while sleeping.

Poor posture and slouching over the years often leads to pain in the back, neck and shoulders. It can decrease flexibility, joint movement and balance. Poor posture can even make it hard to digest your food properly and breathe easily.

Simply being aware of your posture can lead to improvement. Evaluate how different situations effect your posture and take action to correct it when necessary.

This Edition's Q&A: Three Easy Stretches to Prevent Back Pain

Q: Are there any stretches I can do to prevent back pain?

A: Many everyday activities can lead to back pain. Regular stretching can help protect your back by increasing flexibility. Talk with your doctor before starting a new program of back exercise, especially if you have a history of spinal problems or back injury. Once you have the all clear, try doing the three stretches below regularly to protect your back.

Knee to Chest Stretch:

Lie on your back on the floor with your legs extended.

Bend and lift your right leg and bring the knee toward your chest. Grasp your knee, thigh or shin with your hands and pull your leg towards your chest, as far as it will comfortably go.

Hold for 20 seconds and slowly extend leg to return to starting position.

Repeat 3 times for each leg.

On All Fours — Cat Stretch:

Begin on your hands and knees on the floor. Your hands should be under your shoulders and your knees should be under your hips.

Exhale and gently arch your back, inhale and tighten your core muscles and round your back like a cat stretching. Hold in each position for 5-10 seconds and move slowly between each. Repeat 10 times.

Standing Back Arch:

Stand up straight with your feet shoulder-width apart.

Put the palms of your hands on your lower back. Take a few slow, deep breaths to relax.

Bend your upper body backwards, keeping your knees straight. Support your back with your hands. Hold for 5 seconds. Return slowly to your starting position.

Repeat 5 times.

Sport Spotlight: Football – Reducing Injury Risk

Due to the full contact and high speed of the game, it probably doesn't come as a surprise that football tops the list of injury statistics for high school sports. It is estimated that 444,281 high school football players were injured during the 2016-2017 school year with a large portion of those injuries occurring to the knee and ankle. The good news is that an athlete can take several steps, both on and off the field, to minimize the risk of injury.

Proper preparation for play is vital to help avoid injury. Part of this preparation includes maintaining fitness during the off-season and having a pre-season physical performed; both will ensure that you are in good physical condition and ready for play when the season starts. If you are out of shape at the start of the season, it's important to gradually increase your level of intensity to slowly build back up your physical fitness. Players should always warm up and stretch prior to practice and games as cold muscles are more prone to injury.

Wearing proper protective equipment during play – including helmets, shoulder/hip/tail/knee pads, thigh guards, mouth guards and proper shoes - is another important factor to reduce the risk of injury. Excellent hydration habits before and during play are also key. Even mild levels of dehydration can hurt performance and cause your body to be unable to effectively cool itself. It is generally recommended that athletes drink 24 oz of a caffeine free drink 2 hours prior to exercise, and 8 oz of water every 20 minutes while exercising. Stretching after each training practice is another way to reduce your risk for injury. It helps to reduce muscle soreness and keeps muscles long and flexible.

In addition to the steps above, the coaching staff should be prepared for injuries that do occur by being knowledgeable about first aid for minor injuries (cuts, bruises, minor strains) and having a plan to reach medical personnel for more significant injuries (concussions, dislocations, sprains, fractures). They should also be able to recognize early signs of pain and discomfort and teach the players to be aware of those signs as well. Being careful to listen to your body, decrease training time and intensity if pain or discomfort develops and waiting until the symptoms of an injury are completely gone before returning to play will reduce the risk of injury and also help avoid burn-out from overtraining. Although it's impossible to completely take injury off the board due to the nature of the game, with the proper routine and appropriate preparation, football-related injuries can largely be avoided.

Did You Know?

Humans aren't the only ones who suffer from arthritis. Dogs, cats, birds and elephants are just some of the animals who can be afflicted with arthritis. Scientists have even discovered signs of arthritis in dinosaur fossils!

Upcoming Events

- August - National Spinal Muscular Atrophy Awareness Month.
- September – National Spinal Cord Injury Awareness Month
- September 3rd – Labor Day (Office Closed)
- October 16th – World Spine Day

Contact Us

We'd love to hear from you! If you have any topics you'd like to see covered in our newsletter or questions addressed in our Ask the Doctor features, please drop us a note in our suggestion box. You may also email us at info@SpineInstituteFL.com or find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/SpineInstituteFL.

5050 S. Florida Avenue
Lakeland, FL 33813
863-688-3030 ph
863-688-4430 fax
www.SpineInstituteFL.com



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