



## Backpack Awareness

Worldwide, millions of school-aged children carry backpacks. National School Backpack Awareness Day was created by the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) to educate children, parents, teachers, and communities about backpack safety.



For almost a decade, occupational therapy practitioners and students have advised a backpack strategy of "Pack it Light, Wear it Right". In 2005, over 300 Backpack Awareness events were held, reaching 10,000 children and millions more through TV and newspaper coverage (www.aota.org). In 2006, nearly 500 backpack events were held in schools, community centers, and retail facilities reaching more than 100,000 students in every state (www.aota.org).



Modeled after AOTA's successful National Backpack Awareness Day, in 2005 occupational therapists and students created Backpack Awareness Days in Iceland. To ensure that the event was culturally relevant, a mascot of an elf was created and all materials were translated into Icelandic.



In 2006, 54 schools and over 1965 students (~5% of all students in Iceland) participated in Backpack Awareness Days. Thirty two occupational therapists and many students hosted the days events.



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Heavy Books, Heavy Packs, Aching Backs  
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## Healthy Computing

Worldwide, millions of school-aged children use computers. Although in recent years there have been studies on the effect that computer use has on children's cognitive skills and social skills, there have been very few studies on the effects of computer use on a child's physical well being (1).

Research on computer workstations for adults has suggested that a poorly arranged computer workstation is associated with increased musculoskeletal discomfort (2). Some researchers (3) have suggested that children are at an even greater risk than adults because computers and peripherals are designed for adults' larger proportions.



Stretch Break for Kids, an ergonomic software program was designed as a collaborative initiative with Para Technologies to help prevent musculoskeletal discomfort associated with computer use in school-aged children. Stretch Break for Kids gently reminds the student to take periodic breaks while using the computer by showing animated stretches and ergo tips. Stretch Break for Kids has been downloaded on over 4,000 computers.

Working with the Institute of Public Health in Iceland, in 2006 Stretch Break for Kids was translated into Icelandic and made available on the Institute's website. This Icelandic version has been downloaded on over 2,000 computers.



## References

1. Subrahmanyam K, Kraut RE, Greenfield PM, Gross EF. The impact of home computer use on children's activities and development. *Children and Computer Technology* 2000; 10(2): 123-144.
2. Putz-Anderson V. Jobs and cumulative trauma disorders. In: Putz-Anderson V, editor. *Cumulative trauma disorders: A manual for musculoskeletal diseases of the upper limb*. Bristol, PA: Taylor and Francis. p. 21-30.
3. Oates S, Evans GW, Hedge A. An anthropometrics and postural risk assessment of children's school computer work environments. *Computers in Schools* 1998; 14(3/4): 55-63.