

Pack it Light. Wear it Right.

Laptops and briefcases

When you've got a heavy workload, it's easy to find yourself toting a lot of weight back and forth to work, but heavy laptop bags or briefcases can take their toll on your back, neck and shoulders. Another common side effect is poor posture, because an over-loaded bag, or one that's carried improperly can cause the carrier to lean to one side.

These simple strategies can help you avoid unnecessary injury and keep you on the job:

Choosing a bag:

- Select a bag made of lightweight material (vinyl or canvas instead of leather).
- Choose a bag with wheels to help you take a load off.
- Backpack-style laptop bags with wide, adjustable and padded straps are excellent options, because they distribute the weight evenly.
- While bags with a single shoulder strap are not ideal, if you choose this option, ensure the strap is long, wide, adjustable and padded, if possible. Ensure that the straps do not fit too snugly. Poorly designed shoulder straps can dig deep into the muscles and put strain on the nerves.

Packing your bag:

- Reducing the weight you must carry is key to avoiding injury. Make time to check your bag/briefcase each day and remove items you don't need.
- Your laptop can be a heavy load to tote all on its own, but when you add the A/C adaptor cord, a spare battery and other accessories, your back and shoulders bear the brunt. Consider purchasing an extra set of accessories to leave at the office so you don't have to carry them back and forth from home.
- Always pack the heaviest items at the bottom of your bag and make use of pockets to distribute the weight.



Carrying your bag:

If you choose not to use a bag with wheels, wearing your bag correctly is a must:

- If using a backpack-style case, use both shoulder straps and the waist strap, and adjust them to minimize the bag's movement.



- For bags with a single shoulder strap, place the strap over the head to rest on the opposite side of the laptop bag or briefcase to help distribute weight more evenly. Switch shoulders frequently.

Other tips:

1. Try to maintain good posture. When standing, your head, shoulders, hips and ankles should line up, one comfortably above the other. Your knees should be slightly bent and your feet should be shoulder-width apart or more. For good posture, try to flatten your back against a wall or chair. Roll your shoulders back and down and slowly pull your head and chin back.

2. Exercise can help prevent injury. Regular exercise such as walking, swimming, or bicycling will help the body stay conditioned. Stretching before and after activities will help reduce muscle strain.
3. Specific strengthening exercises for the back and abdominal or core area will help promote good posture, condition muscles and prevent injury.

Chiropractic can help:

According to Health Canada, 80 per cent of Canadians will suffer from back pain in their lifetimes. As spinal health care experts, chiropractors are trained to provide diagnosis, treatment and preventative care for disorders related to the spine, pelvis, nervous system and joints.

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 or for more information, go to www.chiropractic.on.ca.