

October - the month of weighing schoolbags

By Katarzyna Taraska

At the Special School Complex in Goleniów in the West Pomeranian Voivodeship in Poland, in October the weighing of school bags was carried out. It is a nationwide project addressed to students, carried out in partnership with the Chief Sanitary Inspectorate. Educational activities implemented as part of the action relate to the prevention of musculoskeletal diseases, are addressed to parents and guardians of primary school student: to regularly check the contents of their children's backpacks, to teachers, to require that they carry only the necessary textbooks, notebooks and students, educating them how to properly pack and wear a school bag. The research shows that the average weight of schoolbags is 3.5 kg, the heaviest weighed: 7.4 kg, 7.2 kg and 6.3 kg. During the action, the weight of 14 backpacks out of 88 examined was exceeded. It was assumed that the weight should not be greater than 10% of the student's weight. The school nurse Danuta Ulas and the coordinator of the Health Promoting School Katarzyna Taraska took part in the weighing of students and schoolbags. It was found that students take more and more extra items to school, e.g. coloring books, additional bottles with beverages, breakfast boxes, and thermoses.

The Light Schoolbag is a nationwide information and educational campaign targeted at elementary school students on the prevention of posture defects. In the School Complex in Goleniów, students of the Primary School, Work-Adaptation School and the First-grade Vocational School were weighted. We want to draw the attention of teachers, children and parents to the issue of heavy backpacks and contribute to reducing the scale of this problem in the future.

In total, 88 students were included in the study, below is a summary of body weight measurements for students and schoolbags.

Tabela: Class/school	number of students surveyed	backpack's weight below 10% of student's body weight	backpack's weight above 10% of student's body weight
I-III primary school	18	15	3 (16,7%)
IV-VIII primary school	33	23	10(30,3%)
I-III Work preparation school	14	14	-
I-III Vocational school	23	22	1(4,3%)
Overall	88	74	14(15,9%)

The research shows that the heaviest backpacks are worn by students of grades IV-VI, and the effect is to bring several bottles of beverages, containers for breakfast, drinks in thermoses, as well as additional loads pose backpacks with frames.

Excessive weight can conduce to shape abnormal body statics, which can lead to curvatures of the spine, cause back pain, and reduce lung capacity. To prevent dysfunction of the musculoskeletal system, students must be provided with appropriate learning conditions, both at school and at home.

The purpose of the "Light backpack" campaign is to make children and their parents aware of the effects of overloading the spine with an incorrect weight of a school bag, as well as to indicate the need to leave some things in school lockers that every student in our school has which will permanently eliminate the problem of too heavy schoolbags.

The next step will be to provide educators with a list of students carrying heavy backpacks and inform parents at the next meeting about the consequences of carrying such weights and finding a joint solution.

Picture 1. Elementary school students with backpacks.



Picture 2, 3. Weighing students.



Picture 4. 7th grade students are waiting for weighing.



Picture 5, 6. Weighing schoolbags.



Picture 7. Poster made by students of the 1st grade Vocational School from class III. „We are carrying light schoolbag”.



Picture 8. Poster made by students of the second grade of primary school. „October- the month of weighing schoolbags”.



January 2020/Coordinator of the Health Promoting School, Katarzyna Taraska