

## BackCare Awareness Week 16 - 21 October 2006

BackCare Awareness Week is an annual national health awareness campaign, which aims to highlight the importance of back care. This year, the campaign will be focussed on protecting young backs and we are inviting schools to take part in a **"Watch Your Back"** week.

We have produced a Schools' Pack with materials designed to make teachers and students think about their backs and how to keep them strong and healthy. The activities have been designed to help teachers lead the way in providing a safe and healthy environment for our children to learn, play and enjoy life, without back pain.

Some of the causes of back pain in children and young people are: sitting with poor posture or for too long in one position, not enough exercise and carrying school bags which are poorly designed and too heavy.

The **"Watch Your Back Pack"** is ideal for the Year 7/8 group, but is suitable for other ages. It contains lots of fun, educational materials including an assembly or lesson plan, posters, booklets, a board game, quiz, competitions and lots of suggested activities. To order a pack, go to the website shop <http://www.backpain.org/ecommerce/cat-packs.php>

Alternatively, complete the following form:

Yes I would like to buy a **Watch Your Back** Schools' Pack:

	Qty	Value
Printed pack* @ £9.95 + £1.00 p&p*		
Downloadable pack @ £4.95 (excludes skellie poster)		

\*N.B. cost of printed pack includes downloadable version

Contact Name: \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

I enclose my cheque made payable to BackCare at the sum of £ \_\_\_\_\_

Credit card number: \_\_\_\_\_ Start date: \_\_\_\_\_ Expiry date: \_\_\_\_\_

Issue Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### **"Protecting Young Backs" - background to the campaign**

# BackCare

The Charity for Healthier Backs

BackCare is a national charity (registered as the National Back Pain Association), which, for the last 40 years has been aiming to significantly reduce the number of people affected by back pain. Last year, as a result of increasing concern about the incidence of back pain in young people, we set up a School Back Pain Group, comprising health professionals, leading ergonomists and educators. After critical evaluation of the relevant research in this field, the group has produced a review document and other materials in support of the campaign "Protecting Young Backs". The campaign aims to:

- raise awareness to the problem of back pain in young people;
- lobby for legislation to protect children's backs;
- introduce better practices in schools and in the home;
- encourage children to look after their backs.

Research shows that nearly half of school children questioned say that they suffer back pain at some time. In the later stages of their schooling around 30% say they are affected by back pain with 8%, that is between 2 and 3 children in every class, suffering chronic or recurrent back pain sufficiently bad to compromise sport, attendance, self esteem, relationships and their future quality of life. There is evidence to show that adolescent back problems persist into adult life

There are a number of reasons why back pain is such a problem for children today and most of them preventable. Our recommendations are:

- Seating - ergonomically designed adjustable chairs to encourage good posture.
- Desks – height-adjustable and with slopes for reading, writing and computer work
- School Lockers - every child should have access to a locker to prevent them having to carry huge weights to and from school and between classes.
- Backpacks - appropriately designed school bags to be worn over both shoulders. Maximum carrying weight limit of around 10% of body weight.
- Physical Activity - at least one hour of physical activity each day within or outside of school, to improve muscle strength and flexibility, support and strengthen the back. A 30:30 wriggle and stretch rule (every 30 minutes for 30 seconds) during long lessons to allow for movement and change in body position.
- Education - health and safety education to be introduced in schools, both for children and staff to teach correct posture and back safety and the importance of exercise. Good habits started in school can be taken home and will stay with children into their adult life.
- Other Health Factors - obesity and smoking are also risk factors for back pain and should be addressed through health education and practical measures in school.

We are currently lobbying the government, and those agencies responsible, to address the problems of inappropriate classroom furniture, lack of lockers, insufficient PE and the lack of back health and safety education in schools.

We are running a schools education initiative during BackCare Awareness Week, October 16th-22nd 2006. Schools are being invited to join in a "Watch Your Back Week", using a BackCare resource pack, to take part in many fun activities relating to back health and safety awareness.

We continue to raise public awareness through a media campaign.

Please return this form to BackCare, 16 Elmtree Road, Teddington, Teddington, Middlesex TW11 8ST or fax to 020 8943 5318. Website: [www.backcare.org.uk](http://www.backcare.org.uk)