



Back to school

Returning to school can really be a 'pain in the back' for thousands of school kids. Nicky Sharp gives some top tips to make sure your children stay healthy.

It is estimated that as many as 70% of school age children could be at risk from back pain as a result of carrying heavy and poorly designed school bags.

Problems often arise because children fall victim to peer pressure and to fashion, and carry trendy but poorly designed school bags, slung over one shoulder or carried in one hand by the straps.

Figures from a study published in the Scandinavian Journal of Rehabilitative Medicine have shown that 68% of children using hand held school bags, and 53% of children carrying a bag on one shoulder experience back pain, mainly as a result of muscle strain, distortion of the spine's natural 'S' shaped curve (scoliosis), raised and rounded shoulders.

Rucksack is best

Research shows that using a rucksack can reduce back pain by more than 23 per cent, provided it is worn correctly over both shoulders.

Choosing the right rucksack

Choose a rucksack with a moulded frame and adjustable shoulder and hip straps. The weight of the rucksack should sit just above the child's waist so the weight rests on the pelvis, not on the shoulders or spine.

The rucksack should have

different compartments to spread the load, be made of lightweight material and the back should be padded for comfort.

When fitted correctly the rucksack should contour snugly to the back rather than hang off the shoulders.

How to pack the rucksack

The rucksack should weigh less than 10% of the child's weight. Ideally a 40kg child should carry no more than 2-3kg.

Pack the heaviest items so they are closest to the child's back. If the heaviest items are packed further away this throws out the child's centre of gravity causing unnecessary back strain.

Make items as secure as possible. If items move around whilst being carried they also upset the centre of gravity. Use separate compartments wherever possible.

How to lift

Lift the rucksack with both hands, ensuring that the back is kept straight, the knees are bent, and the rucksack is kept close to the body. Use the power of the thigh muscles to lift, not the back muscles.

Registered osteopath Nicky Sharp practises at Nova Dental Care centre in East End Road. To make an appointment, contact her on 020 8815 9433.



From the left, Rosie Townsend, John Wade, Azra Nath, Katie Dawbarn (Deputy Headteacher of Martin Infant School), Amanda Neilson, Amanda Walker and willing children pose by the new climbing frame. Picture by Helen Drake

The Great Outdoors

By Helen Drake

Everyone's memory of their first day at school is very special. For the children starting this September in the Reception classes at Martin Infant School, the new dedicated playground created specially for them will be something they will remember for the rest of their lives.

With the help of a substantial donation from the parent-teacher association (PTA), members of staff were able to purchase the equipment needed to create an outdoor classroom including a climbing frame suitable for five-year-olds.

Azra Nath and Amanda Neilson, Chair and Vice Chair of the PTA, said: "We are so grateful to all the parents, carers, staff and members of the local community who have helped us raise this money, particularly the fantastic support we have received from local businesses."

Foundation skills

Why is an outdoor classroom so important? Kevin Ancomb, Head Teacher at Martin Infants, explained: "There are six key areas of learning in the Foundation Stage, of which Physical Development is one: hence the climbing frame. This will develop co-ordination, confidence, turn taking, fine and gross motor skills, all in preparation for, and complementary to, the other five key areas of the Foundation Stage, which include Language and Literacy, Mathematical Development and Knowledge and

Understanding (for example, Science). The outdoor classroom will be set up to teach all these areas".

Over the following year the outdoor classroom will be developed further with the addition of other equipment such as water trays and sand trays.

At the end of the summer term, Amanda Walker, manager of Prickett and Ellis, Rosie Townsend, former manager of Budgens, and John Wade, the new manager of Budgens, were invited as special guests to the school to see the new climbing frame and to receive a formal thank you from the PTA.

Amanda Walker, who grew up in East Finchley, said: "Prickett and Ellis are happy to support the local community", and Rosie Townsend said: "We've been supporting the school for over two years and are happy to continue that support in the future."

KALASHNIKOV KULTUR

By Ricky Savage, the voice of social irresponsibility

A single life

As the latest series of Big Brother crashes mindlessly into the buffers the morons in some think-swamp have discovered who is to blame for global warming. And, guess what, it's not 4x4s double parking outside schools or too many sheep farting too much methane into the atmosphere; it's people who live alone.

In their warped world singles use up more packaging, heating, water and lighting than couples or families or the entire Big Brother household and have to be stopped now. The future has got to be communal. A bit like Big Brother really.

When you leave home you usually end up sharing some slum with a bunch of friends, then you either shack up with your lover and create a love nest or with your best friend and create a slum. A serious case of men and women behaving as badly as possible without getting arrested. But there comes a time when you've had enough of someone else leaving the top off the toothpaste and the only solution is to go solo.

Going solo means never having to say sorry when you fall drunkenly in through the front door at dawn. Going solo means having the chance to be as selfish as you want when you want. Going solo means eating what you want when you want. So what if everyone else reckons your cheese and chocolate pizza is a dietary disfunction too far, they don't have to eat it.

Not anymore. Instead, the choice will be: shack up with your lover, preferably having signed a civil contract or forced yourself into a cosy little marriage, or else get stuck in a government approved version of Big Brother. Well, what an option. Let's look at the 22 social deviants with their collection of weird and wacky character defects. Never mind Mikey who switched from one blonde to the next faster than a rat up a drainpipe, or Nikki who gave eating disorders a bad name and deserved to be evicted twice, or the bizarrely named Spiral, or the winner of the Kit Kat free entry ticket, called Susie, who actually said she was only there for her 15 minutes of infamy. The only way I'd want to spend time in a crowded space with any of them is if I was armed with a combination of high quality narcotics and a machine gun.

Allotment hat-trick

By Richard King

East Finchley Allotments have won the award for the best-kept allotment site in Barnet for the third year in a row. The 12-acre site with nearly 180 plots is one of the largest in Barnet. Members were particularly pleased that their hard work had been recognised again.

The area has been used as allotments since the First World War. It forms part of East Finchley's "big green space" which includes Martin School field, Coldfall Woods and playing fields, the Fuel Lands allotments and the Islington and Camden (St. Pancras) cemeteries.

While each of these has its different uses, together they represent several hundred acres of open space and woodland providing a variety of habitats for wildlife and, like the central London parks, helping to improve our air quality.

The secluded allotments site was used as a filming location for a previous series of the BBC's *Raising the Dead*. The allotment holders, though,

prefer to spend their time raising vegetables! If you're interested in having an allotment on the site, contact the membership secretary Janice Monaghan on 020 8351 2836.

Festival meeting

The East Finchley Festival Steering Group is reviewing this year's festival and planning for next year at an open meeting on Thursday 21 September. Anyone is welcome to share ideas and opinions, and offers of help would be welcomed. The meeting is at 7pm at The Green Man Centre.

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