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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Back to School Backpack Safety with Dr. Thomas Lawhorne**

**DUBLIN, GA (9/16/2019):** If you've ever been concerned about the effects that extra weight might have on your child's still-growing body, your instincts are correct. Nearly 55% of students these days are carrying backpacks heavier than the recommended weight limit—that is, less than 10-15% of the child's body weight. Although kids may seem resilient to back and neck pain, it's important to enforce restrictions on the weight our students carry in their backpacks.

Dr. Thomas Lawhorne, Orthopedic Surgeon with Fairview Park Hospital, explains that "wearing a heavy backpack over an extended period of time can lead to serious chronic back pain or injury." He emphasizes how important it is to choose the right backpack for your students and to follow the appropriate recommendations to help lower their risk of back or neck injury. In order to take the necessary precautions, be sure to encourage students to:

**Limit the weight.** Carry as few books as possible. If you can leave a few books behind, do so. Doctors recommend carrying no more than 10 to 15 percent of your body weight.

**Use both straps to distribute weight evenly.** Using only one shoulder strap on your backpack may cause you to lean to one side and apply unneeded pressure.

**Stand up straight.** If your backpack makes you hunch forward, you may be carrying too much weight. Check your posture to ensure that you are able to stand upright.

**Take a break.** When you can, leave your backpack in your locker and carry just what you need. This will give your back and neck a break from the strain of carrying extra weight.

Of the American students between the ages of 11 and 15, over 60% stated they had back pain related to heavy backpacks and 21% said the discomfort lasted for more than 6 months. "This is a growing problem that can be easily avoided if we just stop and make a few adjustments to the habits of our students," says Lawhorne.

The next time you move your child's backpack after he or she drops it by the door, check to see how heavy of a load it is carrying. "The first step to a healthy adult life is to take care of yourself while you're still young."

To learn more about the orthopedic services offered at Fairview Park Hospital or to take a Back and Neck Pain Profiler quiz, visit [FairviewParkHospital.com](http://FairviewParkHospital.com).

***About Fairview Park Hospital:***

Neighbors Caring For Neighbors – That is Fairview Park Hospital’s commitment to the residents of Laurens and surrounding counties. An HCA-affiliated hospital, this state-of-the-art, 190-bed acute care facility has provided quality health care for Dublin, GA, and the surrounding counties since 1982, with an estimated economic impact of \$75 million annually. Comprehensive community health care services available at Fairview Park Hospital include more than 45 departments and specialty areas. In addition to serving the needs for acute, outpatient and rehabilitative care, the hospital is a leader in wellness, prevention and community health issues.

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