

Your bag could be a health hazard

You could eat the right foods, exercise every day and generally stay away from risky health behaviour such as boozing and taking drugs. However, the likely cause of your health problems could be your oversized bag.

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There is an urban joke about Kampala girls' handbags being "self-contained". The joke goes that one time, a young man invited his girlfriend over to his bachelor pad. As these pads tend to be, he found that he had no refreshments with which to entertain his object of desire. So, he dashed out for soda and biscuits. On return, he could barely recognise his home which the girlfriend had furnished.

As hyperbolic as the story goes, it holds some truths about the size and bulk of women's bags. A modern woman's bag is like those Russian nesting dolls that fit into each other. Inside the big "mother" bag are several bags for cosmetics, reading material such as a Bible, a novel and a notebook, flat shoes, extra clothes, laptop, tablet, two mobile phones and a bottle of their favourite water or juice, which when weighed can be as heavy as 15 or 20 kilogrammes.

Recommended weight

Doctor George Bwesigye, a general physician, advises that a person should never carry more than four per cent of their body weight. "A heavy bag does not only impact on the posture and movement thereby messing a person's aesthetics, but it also wreaks havoc on your neck and back," Dr Bwesigye explains.

Backache

Fatuma Namazzi, a graphics designer,

attributes her chronic backache to carrying a heavy bag. "I am really not a trendy person but I had to carry my heavy laptop out of necessity. Before I got office space, I had to carry everything I needed in my bag to meetings with clients. Sometimes, I would walk over 10 kilometers carrying a load that weighed more than 10 kilogrammes. By evening, I would feel pain in my back. When the pain became too much, my doctor advised me to lighten my bag," Namazzi narrates.

Posture imbalance

Dr Sheekah Chopra, an orthopedic surgeon, cautions against carrying a heavy bag or purse on one side of the body because it leads to an imbalance in posture, presses against muscles and nerves in the neck which run down to the shoulder and are severely strained due to constant load. "In the long term, using one side to carry a heavy bag can cause back, neck, and shoulder pain, even headaches and arthritis," she warns.

The trends might dictate that bigger is better but they are causing unspeakable damage to your back. Dr Chopra reveals that heavy bag can also lead to spine problems.

Recommendation

To avoid this damage, it is important to distribute weight evenly across the back. One way to do this is by using a backpack. Backpacks are supposed to be no longer than the wearer's torso from the base of the neck

correctly, they can prevent injuries. On the other hand, a rolling laptop case can also offer relief to those suffering with back problems. A laptop backpack relieves back strain caused by other kinds of bags, while also offering hands-free mobility.

RECOMMENDATION

To avoid this damage it is important to distribute weight evenly across the back. One way to do this is by using a backpack.

Backpacks are supposed to be no longer than the wearer's torso- from the base of the neck to the hips. If used



By Beatrice Nalubinda

LIFESTYLE

to the hips. If used correctly, they can prevent injuries. On the other hand, a rolling laptop case can also offer relief to those suffering with back problems. A laptop backpack relieves back strain caused by other kinds of bags, while also offering hands-free mobility.



Lightening your load

A study published last year in the Journal of Applied Physiology confirmed what we already knew, carrying heavy bags causes nerve, muscle and skeletal damage. The study showed that the nerves that travel through the neck and shoulders were of particular risk, since carrying heavy bags was shown to cut their capacity and slow the muscles' ability to do as the brain commands.

Clearly, there is an urgent need to lighten our handbag loads. Here are a few tips to guide you.

- **Make use of your office locker.** Keep some of those items you carry to work there.
- **Get organised.** Instead of carrying everything at once, separate your stuff into different categories and put them in different bags so that you have a specific bag for cosmetics, another one for office use, meaning that when you are going out, you leave one bag behind thus lightening your load.
- **Buy miniature-sized items** that are less heavy for items you cannot live without, such as your favourite lotion, body splash and perfume.



Lighten your load. Have a specific bag for each occasion so that your items are divided. NET PHOTOS

ONE SHOULD NOT CARRY MORE THAN THIS PERCENTAGE OF THEIR BODY WEIGHT