



IS YOUR HANDBAG CAUSING YOU ALL THAT PAIN?

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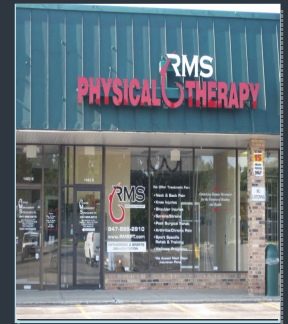
A new fashion trend is emerging, one that can cause more pain than you may realize – it's those trendy, oversized bags (purses for women, and handbags for men) that wreak havoc on the human body.

There's nothing wrong with being trendy. The trouble starts when you start loading up these bags with your laptop, wallet, shoes, cell phone, water bottle, magazine, make-up, and a some work related documents – and carrying this everywhere.

Before you know it, there's a nagging pain in the neck or shoulder that may even radiate down the arm. Carrying the extra weight may cause problems in two ways:

- 1) It pulls on a web of nerves that can cause aching or shooting pain from the neck down the arm.
- 2) Every time you sling your bag over your shoulder, the upper back muscles that stabilize the shoulder blade struggle to counterbalance that weight; eventually they get overworked until a small movement like giving someone a hug or reaching for the phone causes sharp pain

Carrying 10 **extra** pounds on one side of the body can cause the trunk to **tilt sideways** to compensate, causing more stress for your lower back. As the stiletto heel is to your foot, the designer handbag is to your upper back.



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Your Physical Therapist Can Help You

As your physical therapists, we want the best for your health. Here are some tips that will help you stay injury-free.

- 1) **Posture** - This matters more than anything. The ideal stance is shoulders relaxed, back upright with no leaning to either side.
- 2) **Strength** - Strengthening the right muscles makes a big difference. Not sure what your muscle imbalances are? We can help. Call our office today to see what your muscle imbalances are and which exercises are ideal to keep painful days away.
- 3) **Strap-Hanging** - If your bag has a strap that rides diagonally across your body, use it. That should distribute the weight better, and you don't have the feeling it will slip off, so you're less likely to hike your shoulder. Also, swap sides so you're not always using the same shoulder.
- 4) **Switch It Up** - Pack as little into the bag as you can, the bare essentials. Also, try to vary the bags, and the weight you carry.
- 5) **Don't Ignore Pain** - If your bag is big and heavy, and your posture is far from ideal, you might be on your way to an injury. Frequent neck stiffness, headaches, and pain radiating down the arm may develop. **If you notice any of these symptoms, and if ice and rest don't help, leave your bag behind. It's time to head over to our office.**



Your Best Bag

As your physical therapists, we recommend that your purse (or handbag) should not exceed 10% of your body weight. So a bag that's more than 5 pounds when empty is a bad start.

If the load is excessive, your head and neck jut forward rather than staying over your shoulders. This can lead to headaches, neck tension, and back pain.

Things to look for in the right purse:

- Avoid long-straps – they cause the purse to bump you at the hip, and may slip down the shoulder (causing you to hunch up the shoulder).
- Short-handled bags/purses should be:
 - Over the shoulder, tucked under your arm
 - Over the forearm, or
 - Held in your hand.
- An over-sized bag is dangerous because it invites you to put lots of things in it, which can get pretty heavy.
- Try placing your things in a way that minimizes any twisting of the trunk when you look in your bag to find something.



More Information

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