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Further Reading

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Useful Websites

www.thebabywearer.com - All kinds of articles, reviews & tips

www.slingmeet.co.uk - Information on local sling groups

www.didymos.com/index.php?s=sah&t=babys%20anatomie - More information about the anatomical benefits of a good sling

www.askdrsears.com/html/5/T051100.asp - Babywearing by Dr Sears

Babywearing

A Guide for Professionals



About Babywearing

Babies are designed to be carried. Even newborn babies lift up their knees and stretch out their arms when they're picked up, automatically adopting the right position to sit on their parent's hip.



Being carried correctly in a sling supports the spine, keeping it in the C shape that babies' spines need to be in while they are growing.

As babies' hip joints are not fully formed at birth, it's also important that babies' legs are flexed when they're in a sling so that the hip joint sits securely in the socket. The baby's knees should be higher than their bottom and their legs should be supported up to the knee so that an M shape is seen when looking at the baby:



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Outward Facing Positions

In contrast, when babies are carried on the front facing outwards, they can't adopt the squatting position that supports healthy hip and spine development.

Their weight is supported through their pelvis and/or the base of their spine and their spine cannot curve, instead straightening into a position that hollows the back (Casses, 1996).

Although babies who face outwards can look around, they are unable to shut off from stimuli. They can't see their parent's face or look away. Babies who face outwards for a long time may become hyper-stimulated and harder to settle. Babies can only sleep in an unnatural position.

Contrast the position of these babies with those whose bodies adopt the correct M shape:



Wearing a baby in an outward facing position causes greater strain to be put on the babywearer too. Babies who enjoy facing outwards can be carried on the hip or the back.

Benefits of Back Carrying



In many cultures, babies are carried on their parent's backs. Newborns can be carried on the back, although many people wait until their baby is starting to sit up, at around 5 - 6 months.

Babies carried on the back are able to look around and see the world in the same direction as their parent (Clark et al, 1977; Gregg et al, 1976). They can shut off by looking at their parent's body when they need to.



The Benefits of Babywearing: Babies

Babies who are worn in slings tend to be more settled and sleep for longer (Morris, 1992). They have improved digestion from being held upright and they cry for about half the length of time of babies who are not worn by their parents (Hunziker & Barr, 1986). They spend most of their time in a state of 'quiet alertness', able to take in what is going on around them (Sears, 2003). Premature babies gain weight faster when they are held regularly or worn in a sling (Solkoff et al, 1969).



The Benefits of Babywearing: Parents

Parents who carry their babies enjoy a close relationship with their baby and learn quickly to pick up on their cues (Anisfield et al, 1990). They have a lower incidence of post-partum depression (Lonstein, 2007). They also enjoy having a happier and more settled baby.



Breastfeeding may be easier. Mum can read baby's cues and react quickly to his needs and having her baby close will help her milk supply.

Using a sling means that parents will have their hands free. This makes tasks such as washing up or cooking much easier. If you have another child, using a sling can reduce sibling rivalry and frustration as you'll have your hands free to play.

Babywearing in Special Situations



Parents of babies with special needs or parents of twins can still wear their babies. It's worth talking to a babywearing consultant about the best type of sling for your child(ren). There are wraps available which can be used to help with kangaroo care (used to support the baby's weight when lying on Mum or Dad's chest but not for carrying the baby).