

The Benefits of Babywearing: Babies

Babies who are worn in slings tend to be more settled and sleep for longer. They have improved digestion from being held upright and they cry for about half the length of time of babies who are not worn. They spend most of their time in a state of 'quiet alertness', able to take in what is going on around them. Premature babies gain weight faster when worn.



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. They have a lower incidence of post-natal depression.

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).



Choosing a Sling or Baby Carrier

When choosing a sling or baby carrier, it may be useful to ask yourself the following questions:

Who will be using it?

If more than one person will use it, avoid buying a pouch and ensure that you choose a mei tai, soft structured carrier (SSC) or a wrap which is long enough for both of you.

How often will you use it and for how long?

If you plan to wear the sling for long periods of time (perhaps because you have a little baby that loves to be carried), you'll want a sling that distributes weight evenly across both shoulders and your back. A woven wrap, mei tai or soft structured carrier would probably be best.

How old is your baby/child?

Stretchy wraps are ideal for newborns and easy to use as they're tied in advance. If you're starting to wear an older baby, you could try a woven wrap, mei tai or soft structured carrier.

How easy do you want your sling to be?

Wraps are very versatile but take some practice to learn how to tie them. Ring slings, mei tais and SSCs require little practice.

Buying a Sling Online or Secondhand

There are lots of slings available online and secondhand. Please be aware that bag slings have been shown to be unsafe and should not be used for any baby or child. (These are not the same as pouches or ring slings). You should always look for a sling that holds the baby in the position shown inside this leaflet.

Babywearing



A Guide to Wearing Your Child in a Sling or Baby Carrier

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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:



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.

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 find it harder to settle. Babies who fall asleep 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. They can also shut off by looking at their parent's body when they need to.

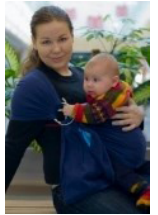


Babywearing Options



Pouches are useful for quick trips and can be used for babies and toddlers of all ages. Weight is spread through only one shoulder.

Ring Slings are easy to adjust and can be used from newborn through to toddler. Babies can be held upright or in the cradle hold and later on the hip.



Mei Tais are Asian style carriers which can be used on the front, back or hip. The weight is distributed through both shoulders and the waist.

Stretchy Wraps are ideal for newborns and can be used up until about the age of 2. They can be pre-tied before the baby is put in and are very supportive.



Woven Wraps offer the highest level of support and are extremely versatile. They can be used for newborns and can support the weight of heavy pre-schoolers.

Soft Structured Carriers usually fasten with buckles and are quick to put on and adjust. They can be used on the front, back or hip. They have a wide base to fully support the baby, unlike other carriers with a narrow base under the baby's crotch.

