

Choosing a Sling or Baby Carrier

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

How old is your baby/child?

Different slings are more suitable for different ages of babies although babies' and parents' preferences also are very important. Stretchy wraps, for example, are ideal for newborns but less suitable for an older baby or toddler.

Who will be using it?

If more than one person will use a sling, you'll need to buy an adjustable sling or carrier unless you're both exactly the same height & size. If choosing a wrap, make sure it's long enough for both of you and make sure you're both confident using whichever sling you choose.

How often will you use it and for how long?

Think about how the sling distributes weight and try to choose one that spreads the weight through both shoulders and your back if you'll be using it for long periods of time.

How easy do you want your sling to be?

Wraps are very versatile but take some practice to learn how to tie them. Some people prefer tying slings while others are happier using ones with buckles or rings.

Babywearing Training

If you are interested in training to support other parents, visit the School of Babywearing website at www.schoolofbabywearing.com for information on **Babywearing Peer Supporter Training** for people who support others through Sling Libraries, Sling Meets and groups, antenatal classes and Children's Centres and **Babywearing Consultant Training** for people interested in a more comprehensive qualification enabling you to offer one-to-one advice. We also run workshops for midwives, lactation consultants and retailers and in **Using Slings for Labour and Birth**.

Expert Advice

If you'd like further information or advice about slings and baby carriers, visit Babywearing UK to find people in your area who can help, including details of:

Sling Meets and Sling Libraries

These are usually run by volunteers who are babywearers themselves. They may hire out slings for you to try or allow you to meet others interested in babywearing and ask questions about slings.

Babywearing Consultants/Sling Consultants

These are people who have undertaken training to allow them to offer advice to parents, on a group or individual basis. They will usually make a charge for their services and should be qualified and insured.



Babywearing UK is a social enterprise which provides information about the use of slings and baby carriers, as well as a range of services for parents, professionals, sling manufacturers, distributors and retailers.

www.babywearing.co.uk

0300 800 1471 enquiries@babywearing.co.uk
Registered Community Interest Company: 7472169

For details of your local
babywearing group,
sling library or
Babywearing Consultant, visit
www.babywearing.co.uk/local

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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 fit their parent's body.



Being carried correctly in a sling supports the spine, keeping it in the rounded '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:



Even in a well fitting sling, without support from knee to knee it isn't possible for a young baby's hips & spine to be well supported.



Positive Effects of Babywearing for Parents

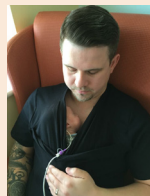
Parents who carry their babies enjoy a close relationship with their baby and learn to pick up on their cues. They have a lower incidence of post-natal depression.

Breastfeeding may be easier. Mum can read baby's cues and react quickly to his needs; having her baby close will help her milk supply. Bottle feeding in a sling is possible too.

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.

Babywearing in Special Situations

Parents of babies with special needs, premature or low birthweight babies and twins can still wear their babies. Talk to a babywearing consultant about the best sling or skin to skin T-shirt for your child(ren).



www.vija-design.co.uk

Positive Effects of Babywearing for 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 may cry less. 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 and have better temperature regulation.

Sling Safety

There are some simple safety tips which can be used to make sure that your baby is always carried safely. A good sling or baby carrier should have these features (remember the TICKS acronym):



www.didymos.com

- ✓ **T**ight: Your baby should be close to your body so that they can't slump down
- ✓ **I**n view at all times: You should be able to glance down & see your baby's face
- ✓ **C**lose enough to kiss: Your baby should be high enough and close enough to your chin for you to kiss them on the forehead or face
- ✓ **K**eeep chin off the chest: There should be at least one finger's space between your baby's chin & their chest to allow them to breathe easily
- ✓ **S**upported back: Your baby's back should be supported in a natural position, ideally with their tummy towards you in an upright position or with their bottom at the deepest part of a pouch or ring sling. Press gently on their back - they shouldn't uncurl or move towards you

When you first get a sling or carrier, practise using it with another adult nearby or close to a bed or sofa, until you feel confident. Check your sling regularly for wear and tear and only undertake safe activities while wearing your baby.

Nursing in a sling or carrier may be possible once breastfeeding is well established and you feel confident babywearing. You should always be able to see your baby's face and ideally babies should be fed in an upright position and returned upright when not feeding.

Babywearing Options

Here are the main types of sling available:



Pouches are simple pockets of fabric, worn over one shoulder. They can be put on and off very quickly. Some are adjustable so can be worn by people of different sizes.

Ring Slings are also worn over one shoulder and adjusted by pulling the fabric through the rings. Babies can be held upright and on the hip when they have good head control. Toddlers can also be carried.



Mei Tais are Asian style carriers which consist of a structured body panel with straps. They can be used on the front, back or hip.

Buckle Carriers also have a panel of fabric with straps but 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 a baby from knee to knee.



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Stretchy Wraps are made from stretchy fabric and are one long piece of material. They can be pre-tied before the baby is put in and can only be used for front carries.

Woven Wraps are long pieces of woven fabric. They offer a high level of support for the wearer and are extremely versatile. They can't usually be pre-tied but can be used for front, hip and back carries.



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Stretchy Hybrids offer the flexibility of a stretchy wrap but without the need for tying. They can be used from birth to toddler in different positions.