



## **Baby Wearing: Suggestions for Carrying your Baby**

### **Baby Carrying Overview**

Car seats are for the car and their frequent use as carriers outside of the car are known to cause undue postural distortions to both the mother and baby.

Although strollers seem to be most convenient for the mother's body, it is well known and documented that close contact between baby and parent is important for your baby's physical, emotional, social and neurological development. Additionally, strollers and car seats offer restricted postural options for the baby's developing cranium and spine which further affects all aspects of their health and well-being.

Therefore the carriers of choice are the baby slings, sacks, pouches and wraps. Because each carrier may cause a repetitive posture for both mother and baby, we advise that parents have a variety of carriers on hand for various stages of baby development, weight gain and mutual comfort for carrying.

### **Considerations for the Mother:**

The hormone relaxin may remain in your system up to nine months after delivery and so postural adaptations may adversely affect your spinal joints while trying to perform new activities such as carrying your baby. Regular chiropractic check ups are a must during this period to help you maintain a healthy spine and nervous system. Being conscious of your spinal posture is also very important after you deliver your baby and so choosing ways to carry your new baby may be one of the most important decisions you make to support your regular, postpartum chiropractic adjustments.

### **Considerations For the Baby:**

In addition to having your baby's spine checked by your family chiropractor right after birth, it is important that you discuss variations of postures for your baby's optimal development. This includes sleep, play time, breastfeeding and baby carrying positions.

With modern living came the use of strollers and other infant back lying carriers. The numerous and not so beneficial effects of these more modern carriers is being noted and there is a growing concern and return to using cloth, body carriers that provide varied baby positions and keep the baby closer to the parent.

### **The importance of varied baby positions:**

Ever since the "Back to Sleep" program of placing babies on their backs to reduce the incidence of SIDS, babies have spent more time on their backs than ever before. Combined with the additional use of strollers, infant seats, car seats and other similar reclining carriers, doctors of chiropractic are noticing a significant increase in flattened spots on the backs of the heads of infants. Since an infant's head is so soft and impressionable by position, it is vital that parents offer numerous positions for the baby during waking and carrying hours. Strollers, car seats and the many infant back lying carriers add additional time spent in this compromised and limited posture. The resulting fattened heads have more than cosmetic concerns though, they add to cranial distortions and therefore neurological compromise for the infant.

Additionally, these back lying seat carriers offer little neck support and those infants with even slight side neck and head tilt usually spend too much time in their distorted postures, resulting in additional spinal compensations.

### **The importance of parent baby contact:**

Many organizations and grass roots groups are encouraging a return to baby wearing because of the effects the constant motion and touch has on the neurological and emotional development of the baby.

### **When choosing a carrier, consider the following:**

- o Does the carrier offer various carrying positions for the baby on the wearer? front, sides, back?
- o Does the carrier offer numerous positions for the baby? Forward facing, chest facing, vertical, horizontal, legs folded, straight or frog-like position? (A carrier with limited positions affect your baby's postural development)
- o How long will the carrier accommodate the child's growth and postural development? (For several months, the entire first year, into the toddler years?)
- o Can a child be transferred from one wearer to another without disturbing the baby?
- o How comfortably can the baby be laid down or removed from the carrier without disturbing their sleep?
- o Can the baby be breast fed while being carried?
- o Is the carrier easily cleaned?
- o Does the carrier require the wearer to support the baby with one hand or are both wearer's hands free?
- o Can a baby be put into all carrying positions by the wearer, or is another person's help necessary?
- o Is the weight of the baby evenly distributed for the wearer's comfort while using the carrier?
- o Does the carrier cause repetitive stress and postural compensations to one area of the wearer's spine?

#204 Provident Professional Building, 4616 Valiant Drive NW Calgary, AB T3A 0X9 P. 403.

247.9301 F. 403. 247.2296 E. drhort@drformoms.com

www.DrForMoms.com