

What to think about when.....

Buying a Baby Sling

A baby carrier can make your life so much easier when on the go, they're generally quite compact, lightweight and endlessly practical - and best of all - babies usually love them!! After all, when you're little, what could be better than watching the world go by while snuggled up warm and safe next to Mummy or Daddy. Like most baby equipment, there are hundreds to choose from on the market so here is a guide with a few things to think about to help you select the perfect carrier. It is especially important with slings to try them out for comfort so if you have an older niece or nephew you can 'borrow' take them along to get a feel for how the sling will feel as baby gets heavier. As always - shop smart and check on line to see if you can get your chosen carrier cheaper than in the shops!

AGE OF BABY

Some carriers are from birth, from 3 months, from 6 months. Also, consider how long you will want to use the sling for. Different slings can be used up to 12 months, 18 months, and 2 years. If wanting to use it to 18mths+ - is a family toddler available to borrow to try them out for weight etc?

WHO WILL USE THE SLING

If your partner will be using it too it needs to be comfortable for both of you. Think about the colour, you may want it to be reversible if you choose a very girlie pattern.

CARRYING POSITION

4 main types - front, back, hip or multi positional. This will depend very much on how long you want to use it for. Most multi positional ones are those that are for up to 2 yrs. Front only are often most suitable for carrying newborns.

AILMENTS

If you suffer with any back ache or hip problems, this should all be taken into account. Ensure you choose a sling that will spread weight across your body, specifically across your shoulders and onto your hips to avoid strain on your back. A soft structured sling or Mei Tai would probably be best for you. If your medical condition is serious, speak to a health professional before deciding to use a sling.

SLING TYPES:

POUCH - This is a single piece of fabric which is sewn together at the ends to form a loop. It is worn over one shoulder like a sash and the fabric is folded in on itself lengthways to form a pocket for the baby. It is generally very versatile allowing for full recline supporting a newborn's head and back up to carrying a toddler in the piggyback position. It is also possible to breastfeed baby with discretion while using the sling. Very compact when folded.

WRAP / SLING - A wrap-around baby carrier or sling is basically a long piece of fabric. They can be wrapped and tied in various ways to provide a secure and comfortable carrying position for any age of baby. The stretch fabric type is better for younger babies. As it gives, as the baby gets bigger it provides less support. It also allows you to

tie the wrap first and then put the baby in. The woven fabric type is better for older and heavier babies as it gives better back support to the parent. However you will probably have to tie this type around the baby making it slightly trickier to put on. A ring sling is made from a single length of fabric which is then fed through a double ring to secure it in place. They are adjustable for you and your partner, getting the fit just right. Very compact when folded.

FRONT CARRIER - As the name suggests this is a structured carrier designed to carry the baby on the front either facing in or out. Baby's head is supported with a padded headrest which is folded down for an older baby. This design is suitable for a baby up to about 9 months old. Generally the weight of the baby is carried on the shoulders although some designs do feature a lumbar support to distribute the weight onto the hips.

SOFT STRUCTURE - Soft structured carriers are more conventional looking. They have a rectangular section which holds your baby securely against your body and straps to attach the carrier to you. They are very versatile and can generally be used in front or back positions.

HIP - As the name suggests, a hip carrier allows the baby to be carried on the hip either in a soft structured carrier or directly on a hip seat. In the case of a hip seat the baby is held in place by your arm as you would do without a carrier but with the advantage of being able to stand straight putting far less strain on your back.

BACKPACK - Much like a rucksack, a backpack allows the baby to be carried on the back facing forward looking over your shoulder. Backpacks are a popular choice for longer walking trips and for older babies. Typically quite bulky to store.

ASIAN STYLE / MEI TAI - A Mei Tai carrier is a lightweight carrier that can be used for both babies and toddlers and it doesn't have any complicated buckles or straps. A basic Mei Tai consists of a square panel of fabric with four straps attached to it at the four corners. The top straps are rather long and are designed to be crossed across your chest or used like backpack straps. The bottom straps are shorter and are for tying around your waist. The Mei Tai offers custom fit to all sizes of baby and adult. You can carry your child from birth through the toddler years, on the front, hip or back in a variety of carrying positions. Very compact when folded.

Rose and Rebellion Baby Carrier

I bought this sling (at our Bonkersaboutbabies Show actually!) when Tahlia was already 18mths old and 2 stone. We were off to Butlins and I hoped I'd be able to use it instead of a buggy occasionally.



The holiday was fab - and made about 200% better by the sling. I honestly believe it is a piece of engineering genius!! Tahlia LOVES it. We hardly used the buggy at all on holiday and 4 mths later I still use it all the time. I've even mowed the lawns with her on my back! Its amazingly versatile, I've carried Tahlia in it on my front facing towards me and away, and on my back. Even given her weight I can carry her for hours with no discomfort - and I'm not even especially strong! Even Kaiya (3.5) goes in it

on my husband's back (with the sling reversed to the more manly black colour). I did think the sling pricey at first but since would have happily paid double. My only regret is that I didn't get it when Kaiya was 3 months - it would have made my life so much easier on hundreds of occasions.

Recommended by Cressida Johns

Rose and Rebellion Baby Carrier available from all good stockists including www.babygoshop.co.uk



Check it out!

Take this check list with you when you shop. Why not show it to an assistant and ask them to show you the products that meet your criteria?

Age of baby when starting to use sling: Birth / 3 mths / 6 mths

Age of baby when finish using sling: 12 mths / 18 mths / 2 yrs

Carrying Position: Front / Back / Hip / Multi Position

Carrier Type: Harness / Sling/Pouch / Soft Structure / Wrap/Tie / Front Structured / Back Structured

Other Considerations: (circle the must haves)

Fabric Type / Unisex / Storage / Pockets / Compact Storage / Able to Breastfeed while in sling