The Guide to Carrying Babies

www.babybjorn.com
Introduction

This booklet discusses the benefits of carrying and holding your baby, the correct ways to do this and how a baby carrier can help. It can be used as basic information for questions for and discussions with your midwife and other health professionals.

The booklet will show you the importance of bonding with your baby, how exercise with a baby does not have to be difficult, how baby carriers can help with breast feeding, the correct ways to carry your baby, and tips for taking your baby out in both summer and winter. There’s a useful check-list for you to keep for when you’re packing for a day out with your baby, and the booklet also explains the safety issues that need to be considered when using a baby carrier.
Bonding

Getting to know your baby is part of the bonding process. Nature has planned that your newborn is dependant on others for feeding and care so that you spend a lot of time with your newborn during the first few weeks / months to get to know each other. Forming a relationship with your newborn baby is essential for baby’s development and important for other health outcomes. Getting up in the night when baby cries may feel like a chore sometimes but it makes you learn about the wide range of cries your baby has and how your baby communicates. This is all part of the bonding process. Strong ties between baby and parents will enable the child to develop future relationships and interact better.

Breastfeeding also aids the bonding process – holding a baby at breast level is the perfect location for baby’s vision. By cradling baby in your arms connecting visually is easy. Eye contact helps you to interact with your baby. It’s important to remember that bonding is a process; it doesn’t happen instantly and is not something that has to be limited to happening within a certain period of time. It’s also a process that involves both mother and father.

Using a carrier aids the bonding process through vital body or skin-to-skin contact with your baby. A parent’s closeness and warmth makes baby feel protected and safe and you will learn how his / her body tension can communicate how he / she feels.
Breastfeeding and carriers

Breastfeeding is the best start for your baby, particularly when mobile baby carriers can provide easy access and a secure position for baby to suckle on demand. They have been designed to be functional for breastfeeding – it is easy to un-clip one side of the carrier in order to nurse your baby, without having to remove them from the carrier.

Exercise

Exercise may be the last thing on your mind when you’ve got a newborn baby, but it is important, not only for your own health, but for the health of your baby too. And exercise does not have to mean a strenuous work out in the gym, it could be as simple as going for a walk in the park or countryside.

Loosing your pregnancy weight can be a hard task, especially in today’s celebrity-obsessed society, where magazines and newspapers constantly tell us how long it takes for high profile mothers to lose their baby weight. However, you can exercise without having to leave your baby behind, which also has the added benefit of giving you quality time with your baby. It’s important to maintain your energy levels – getting up in the night and the general stress and worry that comes with having a baby can all take their toll and make you feel tired – exercise is a good way to combat this.
Walking with your baby is a great way of exercising. It’s low impact and is great at increasing your energy levels as well as burning fat. A carrier makes it easy for you to take your baby on walks and excursions. It has been designed to allow you to carry a heavier child and also to carry your child for a longer period of time.

**The role of the father**

The role of the father is a vital one. It is expected that fathers are more involved in the day-to-day needs of baby, setting a positive start for the future parental relationship between father and child. It is important that both parents share in the bonding with and caring for the baby.

Although the role the father plays in a child’s upbringing is different to that of the mother, fathers bring a big contribution to the upbringing both emotionally and physically. In contrast to mothers, fathers usually have a more hands-on role in the physical activities that a child participates in, during the early stages of life.

Studies have repeatedly highlighted the positive role fathers can have in their
Interest and involvement are strongly associated with better education outcomes for children, including better attitudes towards school, better behaviour, better results at school and higher levels of educational qualifications. This comes from being involved in the child’s life from the day they are born.

**Essential packing for a day out with a newborn**

There are so many items you have to remember when taking your newborn for a day out that it is easy to forget some of the essentials. Use the following checklist to tick items off when packing to go out with your baby:

- Baby Carrier
- Cover for Baby Carrier
- Changing bag
- Changing mat
- Nappies
- Baby wipes
• Change of clothes
• Baby blanket
• Re-sealable plastic bags
• Nappy rash cream if needed
• Tissues
• Bibs
• Bottles – if you are expressing milk or baby milk
• Sun hat and sun screen (at least factor 20)
• Food and water
• Baby car seat
Review of ways to carry newborns

There are five correct ways to hold your newborn baby:

The cradle hold

Place the baby’s head in the crook of one of your arms and wrap your other arm around the baby or hold the original arm with the second arm. They feel comforted and secure in this snug, curled up fetal position and will often sleep for long periods.

The shoulder / upright hold

Lean baby up on a shoulder and with the arm of the same side, wrap it around baby’s bottom. Use the other arm to hold against baby’s back and/or to support their neck. Babies sleep well in this position too. This high hold is good for removing colic.

The lap hold

Sitting with your knees propped up, lay your baby face-up, with his head resting against your knees and his feet nestled on your tummy. This hold is good for close eye contact between the baby and parent. The crucial distance is 20cm which allows the parent to interact with baby very closely.
The belly hold
Lay baby chest down over one of your forearms with his head in your hand. Use your other arm to lay across baby’s back to hold them securely. The hold is good for fathers – it’s a strong hold, and also good for removing colic.

The carrier hold
A carrier is a great device that allows you to carry baby hands free, close to your body. They tend to cry less and feel comforted by being held so close for longer periods.

Whichever way you are holding your newborn baby, always make sure that your hand supports baby’s head – they are not strong enough to hold up their own heads until about 4 months old. Carrying babies helps infants settle quickly and easily as they snuggle close to a parent’s warmth and smell. Holding a baby for a long period of time can inevitably lead to back strain and that’s where carrying your baby in a carrier is beneficial. It also leaves you with your hands free for other activities.

Baby carriers are designed to take the strain off your shoulders and to distribute weight evenly across your shoulders, back
and neck. Baby carriers hold baby close to your beating heart – this is very comforting to newborns. They also provide the proper support for baby’s back and head, and guarantee that your child’s legs are in a physiologically correct position.

All babies develop different skills at different ages. Some children will start walking from as early as eight months where as other children may not walk until two years old, although you will continue to carry your child beyond this age. Your child will often ask to be carried, but the best way for them to develop their muscles is by using them when learning to walk. Baby carriers are suitable for use up until about one year old, although this is dependent on weight – the maximum weight is approximately 12kg / 26lbs.

**Going out with your baby in summer / winter**

*All seasons* have different weather conditions and you should adjust the way you take your baby outside depending on the season.

In summer, remember to dress your baby in cool cottons, in a comfortable and easy-to-wear style. Avoid clothes made of synthetic fabrics as they retain heat and are very uncomfortable for the baby, and could result in prickly heat and heat rashes. Choose long sleeved light-weight garments to avoid the sun’s direct rays on your baby’s delicate skin. Hats with a brim are a must too, although make sure that it doesn’t have elastic support as this could restrict blood circulation. It is also vital to remember total sun block – your baby’s skin is extremely sensitive to the harmful rays from the sun. Where possible try to avoid exposure to direct sunlight during the peak sun hours.

Remember that during hot weather your baby may need to be breast-fed more frequently to avoid dehydration. If going out in a car with your baby in the summer make sure you have pull-down sun screens to avoid direct sunlight shining on your baby. Babies in hot cars in direct sunlight can rapidly become de-hydrated.
In winter make sure you wrap up your baby in lots of layers to keep them warm and happy, with feet and hands covered, plus a soft hat for keeping head cosy. Easy on/off outer layers are best so that you can quickly take a layer off if you go inside to avoid them over-heating and perspiring, as this could lead to them feeling even colder when you do go back outside. Look for clothing with a good layer of insulation and a water-repellent exterior fabric.

As long as the weather isn’t too unfriendly, it’s good for your baby to get some fresh air every day, although remember that they will get cold before you do. It’s a good idea to check little fingers, toes, ears, and face regularly. Also remember to always wear the carrier over your outer clothing / coat.

**Travel**

BABY CARRIERS are an essential piece of equipment when travelling, whether you are taking your baby in the car, or on a longer journey on a train or plane. Going on holiday is supposed to be relaxing, a time for
you to get away from life’s everyday stresses, although it may not seem like this when arranging to go away if you have a baby or small child. Considerations you will have to think about include the types of accommodation, child-care at the chosen destination, child safety and how you will actually get there. A baby carrier takes away some of the stress of travelling with a baby.

Long queues are inevitable at airports, and often you will have to walk a long way before you even get on to the plane. Pushchairs are normally required to be checked into the hold – having a baby carrier makes it easy to carry your baby around the airport. Once on the aeroplane you will be required to take off the baby carrier for take off and landing. Seatbelt extensions are fitted to your own seatbelt so you can fly with your baby on your lap, strapped in.

When travelling in a car, car seats are required by law. These are often large, heavy and difficult to take in and out of the car. However, having a baby carrier eliminates the difficulty of having to transport your baby around in a car seat when not driving. Simply carry your baby in a baby carrier and leave the car seat in the car!

Wearing a baby carrier instead of pushing your baby in a pushchair also makes train travel a lot simpler – the big step to get
on to the train is hard to negotiate with a pushchair, as is getting through ticket barriers, and having to struggle to walk along a busy platform that’s packed with commuters.

**Safety issues**

As with all baby equipment, you need to follow the manufacturers guidelines on usage. Firstly, make sure that your baby is within the correct weight limit for using the carrier. It’s fundamental to make sure that baby is positioned correctly within the carrier to avoid accidents and so that baby is as comfortable as possible. Make sure that the straps are tight enough and are supporting your back as well as holding baby securely. And always make sure you hold your baby securely at all times when putting them in and taking them out of the carrier.

Carriers have safety restraints so there’s more reassurance over the safety of your baby. Once you’ve bought your carrier, practice using it before you put your baby in it so that you know that it’s secure, and so it’s comfortable for you to wear.

When wearing your baby carrier with your baby in it, always go through the following check list first:

- Make sure all the fastenings and straps are secure. Give them a quick tug and if anything feels loose, don’t proceed with using the carrier
- Make any adjustments to the straps before you put your baby in
- Wear shoes that are comfy and flat, and that you’re unlikely to slip or fall in
- Be careful when leaning forward or bending
- Be aware that your baby’s movements may affect your balance