

babywearing guide for beginners

BIPOC & LGBTQ+ FRIENDLY BOOKLET



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birthkeeping & herbal care

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Babywearing may seem simple, but it is a skill that both parent and baby learn together. It can take time to find the right carrier, fit, and rhythm for your family. As confidence grows, babywearing can become a powerful tool for connection, helping babies feel safe, seen, and supported. For many families, keeping a baby close is not only practical, it can be part of nurturing kindred attachment and healing across generations.

WHAT IS BABYWEARING?



Babywearing is the practice of carrying a baby or young child on your body using a specialized carrier, wrap, or sling.



where to find support

While this beginner's guide is a solid start, you might need or want additional babywearing support. There are a number of in-person providers and communities, as well as online and over the phone, who you can turn to for help with babywearing – whether that's the day after you've given birth, or even a year postpartum.

Check to see what babywearing support services these birth workers offer in your community.

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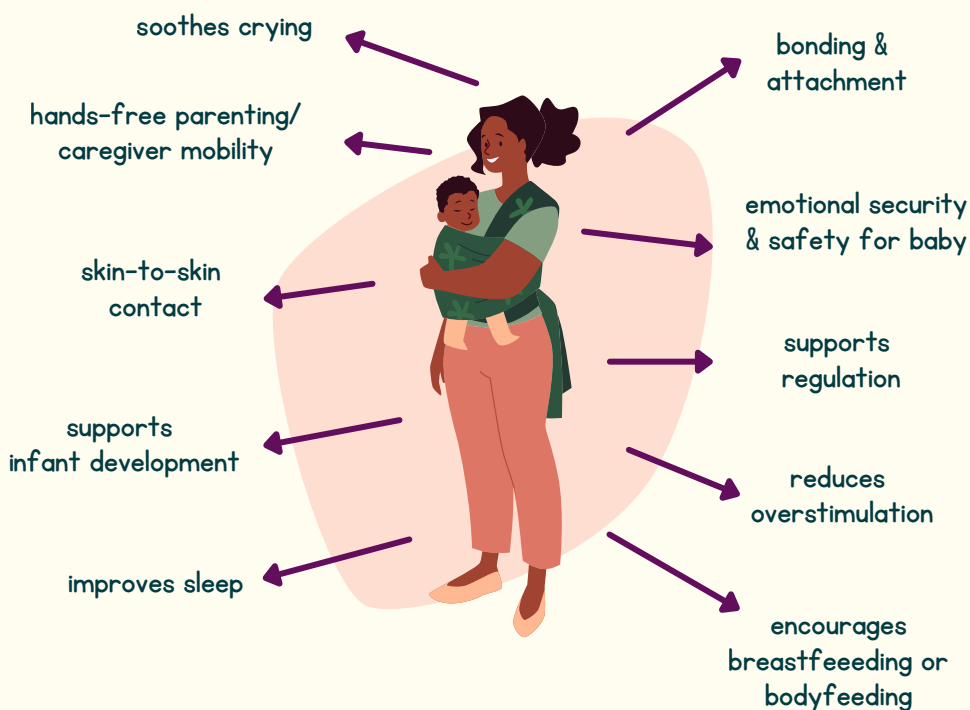
LOCAL BABYWEARING GROUPS



reasons to babywear

Human babies are born expecting closeness. Being held allows them to hear a caregiver's heartbeat, feel their warmth, and experience the movement and rhythms of daily life.

Babywearing offers a practical way to meet these needs while keeping your hands free as a caregiver, but your baby close.





types of baby carriers

There is no single "best" baby carrier—each type offers unique benefits depending on your baby's age, your lifestyle, and personal comfort preferences. Some carriers prioritize newborn snuggles and flexibility, while others offer greater support for longer outings or growing babies. Understanding the main carrier types can help you choose the option that best fits your family's needs.

STRETCHY / CLOTH WRAPS



BEST FOR:

- Newborns (0-4 months) for stretchy, newborn to toddler for cloth
- Sleepy babies
- Skin-to-skin contact & bonding

PROS:

- Soft and highly customizable
- Creates a snug fit for tiny babies

CONS:

- Learning curve for tying, requires practice to learn safely
- Less intuitive for beginners than a buckle carrier
- Can sometimes feel warm in hot weather



RING SLINGS



BEST FOR:

- Newborns through young toddlers
- Around-the-house use

PROS:

- Lightweight and compact
- Fast, one-handed adjustments

CONS:

- Weight rests on one shoulder, which can become uncomfortable or cause uneven inflammation over time

HARD (FRAMED) CARRIERS



BEST FOR:

- Newborns through young toddlers
- Around-the-house use

PROS:

- Good for hikes & long trails
- Excellent weight distribution (reducing shoulder and back strain)
- Often includes storage for essentials like water, snacks, and supplies

CONS:

- Bulky and difficult to pack
- Not suitable for newborns or everyday indoor use



SOFT STRUCTURED CARRIERS (& HYBRIDS)



BEST FOR:

- Newborns to toddlers
- Parents/caregivers who want an easy-to-use carrier
- Parents/caregivers looking for strong back support

PROS:

- Quick to put on
- Excellent weight distribution (reducing shoulder and back strain)
- Many adjust as baby grows, may have to purchase different ones if not

CONS:

- Bulkier than wraps
- Less adaptable for very small/premature babies

if you're only buying one carrier...

a newborn-friendly Soft Structured Carrier (SSC) is usually the most versatile choice. It works from infancy through toddlerhood, is easy to learn, offers excellent back support, and adapts well to daily life, travel, errands, and walks.

cloth baby carriers

from around the world



Top: Commonly used throughout parts of the Andes in countries such as Bolivia and Peru, where babies are carried on the caregiver's back using a large woven textile. In Bolivia, these cloths are often called an aguayo (or aguayu).

Top: A Flower Hmong mother from Vietnam carries her child in a traditional cloth back carrier. This one is also made similar to a soft structured carrier.

Top: Woman from Hamar tribe (who lives in the southwestern region of the Omo Valley near Kenya, Africa) carrying her baby in ankelba.

Bottom: Mother from Eastern Europe – likely Romania or Slovakia – carrying her baby on her back in a traditional cloth wrap, often called a șatka or shawl.

Bottom: Young African mother from Samburu tribe (one of the biggest tribes of north-central Kenya) carrying her baby in a cloth called a kanga in Swahili.

Bottom: Kogi mother and baby using a traditional baby carrier in rugged mountains of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta in northern Colombia





summary of carrier options



STRETCHY / CLOTH WRAPS

Stretchy wraps are long pieces of soft, stretchy fabric that you tie around your body to hold your baby close. They are especially great for newborns because they create a snug, womb-like feel that supports bonding and sleep.



RING SLINGS

Ring slings are a single piece of fabric threaded through two rings to create an adjustable pouch worn over one shoulder. They are quick to put on and ideal for short, frequent carries like around the house or quick errands.



SOFT STRUCTURED CARRIERS (& HYBRIDS)

Soft structured carriers use padded shoulder straps and a waistband with buckles for easy, secure babywearing. They are popular for everyday use because they offer strong support, even weight distribution, and grow with your baby.



HARD (FRAMED) CARRIERS

Framed carriers use a rigid frame and a built-in seat to carry older babies and toddlers on your back. They are best for hiking and long outdoor trips because they provide excellent support and carry heavier weight comfortably.

babycarrying decision chart

Carrier Type	Best Age	Best For	Portability	Parent Comfort	Learning Curve for Method
Stretchy Wrap	Birth-4 months	Newborn snugles, naps, skin-to-skin, around the house	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★
Ring Sling	Birth-Young Toddler	Quick errands, frequent ups/downs, breastfeeding	★★★★★	★★	★★★★
Soft Structured Carrier (SSC)	Birth*-Toddler	Everyday use, walks, travel, hands-free parenting	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
Framed Hiking Carrier	6+ months (sitting independently)-Toddler	Hiking, long outdoor adventures, carrying gear	★	★★★★★	★★★★★

age-based babywearing chart

Baby's Age	Recommended Starting Point
0-4 Months	Stretchy Wrap or Newborn-Friendly Soft Structured Carrier (SSC)
4-6 Months	Soft Structured Carrier (SSC) or Hybrid Carrier
6-12 Months	Soft Structured Carrier (SSC) for daily use; Framed Carrier for
12+ Months	Soft Structured Carrier (SSC) or Framed Carrier for longer outings



babywearing safety

T.I.C.K.S.

Babywearing safety always comes first!

ALWAYS CHECK THESE FIVE THINGS BEFORE BABYWEARING:

T – Tight

Carrier should be snug with no loose fabric

I – In View at All Times

You should always be able to see the baby's face

C – Close Enough to Kiss

Baby's head should be high on your chest and easy to kiss

K – Keep Chin Off Chest

Baby's airway must remain open

S – Supported Back

Baby's back should be supported and not slumped