

Safety notes on using baby carriers, pushchairs, high chairs and car seats

Nowadays, baby products are available in fresh and fabulous designs that promise a wide range of choices. As smart parents, safety should come first when making a purchase. Proper use of these products will ensure that they perform well to protect their loved ones.

Baby Carriers

A baby carrier, or Mei Tai, is a device worn on the body of a caregiver for ease of carrying and taking care of a baby. Previous studies have shown that carrying a baby in the sling close to a mother helps to sooth and comfort her crying baby. Front carry improves caregiver-baby interaction and bonding. However, the American Academy of Pediatrics advises that baby carriers are only suitable for babies over three months old. For younger babies, in-arms carrying or pushchairs should be a good choice.

What are the differences among various types of baby carriers?

Baby carriers come in a wide range of styles, but they can generally be classified into one-shouldered and two-shouldered designs:

Type	Feature	Position	Disadvantage
<p>One-shouldered design:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Wraparound sling * Ring sling * Pouch sling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Made of cotton or mixed fabric - Stretchy or non-stretchy - Compact design for easy carrying and storage - Easy to use - Shoulder straps with or without pads - The two rings attached to one end of a ring sling make the device adjustable and secure - Pouch slings with rings or zippers can be adjusted to fit different sized users 	<p>Younger babies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Front cradle carry - or front upright carry <p>Older babies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hip carry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can be tiring after long wear - Requires time to learn to use a wraparound sling - Non-adjustable slings fail to suit the needs of users - Limit the movement of baby's legs - Increase the risk of hip dysplasia
			
			

Pouch sling

Ring sling

Wraparound sling



Type	Feature	Position	Disadvantage
<p>Two-shouldered design:</p> <p>*Mei Tai</p>  <p>Modern Mei Tai</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A sheet of fabric or soft panel with shoulder straps and waist belts - Some with a head rest for the baby or a small pocket for small items - Wide shoulder straps - Padded or unpadded - Easy to use - Able to distribute the weight of a baby - Suitable for longer use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Front upright carry (with the baby facing in or out) or back upright carry  <p>Traditional Mei Tai</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can only carry the baby in an upright position - Mei Tai with a headrest is more bulky and inconvenient for carrying around - Long straps may get dirty as they may easily drag on the ground
<p>*Backpack</p> <p>*Soft Structured Carrier</p>  <p>Soft structured carrier</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Soft structured carriers are ergonomically designed with thick padded shoulder straps and waist belts for bigger/heavier babies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Front upright carry (with the baby facing in or out) or back upright carry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fairly bulky, not easy to carry around or store  <p>Backpack</p>

What to look out for when choosing a baby carrier?

Other than personal preference and needs, parents should note the following points when choosing a baby carrier:

Safe and comfortable

Back panel (and the headrest) gives sturdy and sufficient support

Leg holes are of appropriate size, banded with elastic fabric and soft padded

Baby's hips and thighs should be well supported to prevent baby's legs hanging loosely and putting too much pressure on hip joints

Metal backpack:

- smooth seams without sharp points
- with safety locks
- with padding on parts encircling the baby

Read the instructions before buying and using the baby carrier

The straps and waist belt should be wide enough with padding. They, along with other parts (such as the rings), should be durable, intact and made with a strong stitch

Straps should be adjustable

Appropriate for baby's size, weight, age and development

Easy to learn and use

Easy to clean

Made of cotton

Easy to carry around and store



What to look out for when using a baby carrier?

Caregivers should watch out for the following safety issues before using a baby carrier:

- ❁ Single shoulder slings or backpacks are **NOT** suitable for babies under four months old
- ❁ Try a new carrier only when your baby is content
- ❁ Ask a family member to help when using the carrier for the first time
- ❁ Ensure sufficient support for a baby's head and neck because when babies are sleeping, their back muscle is in a relaxed state





Put on and take off the carrier on a safe and secure surface



Use a mirror to check your baby's position. Make sure the shoulder straps, waist belt or rings are securely and properly fastened and ensure your baby fits snugly in the carrier



Frequently check on your baby to make sure that they are neither too hot nor too cold



Ensure that your baby can breathe without any obstruction, especially when using the single shoulder sling:



Do not carry your baby hunched with their chin touching their chest



Do not carry your baby too low in the sling



Do not carry your baby with their face pressed tightly against you



Do not allow the sling or any soft objects, like clothes, to cover your baby's head and face



Prevent your baby from reaching dangerous items such as cooking utensils and fans



Protect your baby from intense direct sunlight and offer them enough sun protection, such as by using an umbrella



Never bounce, jump, run or shake when using the carrier to prevent your baby from getting brain, neck and back injuries



Bend your knees if you need to pick something up



Never use a carrier when riding in a car with a seat belt

For details, please visit the following webpage on "Child Safety in Cars":
https://www.td.gov.hk/en/road_safety/road_users_code/index/chapter_5_for_all_drivers/child_safety_in_cars/index.html

Pushchairs

Most parents use pushchairs when going out with their babies so as to offer babies a cosy place for a short rest. Meanwhile, the basket of a pushchair can also serve as a storage space for some handy items. According to the Toys and Children's Products Safety Ordinance, pushchairs sold in Hong Kong must meet the European Standard (BS EN 1888:2018), the ASTM Standard (ASTM F833-21) or the Joint Australian/New Zealand Standard (AS/NZS 2088:2013)*. Be sure to check for such certifications when making a purchase. For babies under 6 months old who can only lie and are unable to sit well on their own, choose to use only pushchairs whose seats can be adjusted to horizontal or nearly horizontal position.



When using a pushchair, parents must beware of the following:

-  Follow the instructions from the manufacturer or stop using it if you spot any damage;
-  Make sure you fasten the safety harness for your baby, and always check and adjust the harness for proper fitting;
-  Whenever you stop the pushchair, engage all the wheel brakes so that the pushchair will not keep rolling into danger;
-  For a foldable pushchair, check that the safety locks are engaged to prevent accidental folding and unfolding;
-  For a pushchair with a reversible handle, do not reverse the handle when your baby is in the pushchair to avoid getting their fingers or arms caught and hurt;
-  Never hang heavy items over the handle to prevent the pushchair from tipping over due to loss of balance;
-  Never let children play with the pushchair or push it around;
-  Never use the pushchair on staircases or escalators to avoid accidents;
-  Unless it is a double pushchair, do not carry more than one baby;
-  Detachable seats cover should be washed regularly for good hygiene.

For details, please visit the Consumer Council webpage:

<https://www.consumer.org.hk/tc/search?q=baby+strollers+choice>

(Only Chinese version is available for this page.)

*https://www.elegislation.gov.hk/hk/cap424!en?INDEX_CS=N

High chairs

Babies start eating solid food at around six months of age. Many parents will buy a high chair at home to facilitate feeding, and to help the baby form the habit of sitting patiently for meals together with their family. Before using a high chair, however, one must read the product manual and instructions, and bear in mind the following:



The safety harness must be fastened when your baby is sitting in the high chair;



The chair legs must be stable and sturdy;



Never leave your baby alone in the high chair, especially where a wall, a dining table or other furniture is nearby. Otherwise, when the baby in the high chair tries to push or pull any object nearby, they may lose balance and have the chair tipped over;



Whenever you use a foldable high chair, make sure all its parts are locked in place to prevent it from folding up suddenly;



For a high chair that uses a guard rail or dining tray to hold the baby in the chair, the rail or tray must be locked in place before use;



Do not move the high chair together with your baby sitting in it, to avoid tipping it over while moving;



Never let your baby climb the high chair or stand on the seat by themselves;



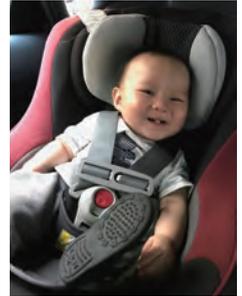
Check the high chair regularly and stop using it if any damage or unstable footing is found.



Baby car carrycots/carriers and child safety car seats

Some parents go out with their babies by car. To ensure car safety for babies, appropriate and approved restraints (e.g. a baby car carrycot/carrier, a child safety car seat or a child harness) should be in place to securely fasten babies to their seats. When using a baby car carrycot/carrier or child safety seat in a car, please note the following:

-  The safety device should be age and weight appropriate:
 - Infants and toddlers should ride in a rear facing car seat as long as possible until they reach the highest weight or height allowed by their seats[#]
 - Older ones must use a child safety car seat or a child harness
-  Child restraint device must be correctly and securely fitted to the vehicle in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions;
-  Give careful consideration of different models of cars and safety devices before purchase;
-  Do not use products with defects or of unknown origin;
-  Clean the seat cover, straps and parts before use;



-  To ensure its normal functioning, check the safety harness regularly and make replacement when necessary;
-  Never hold a baby in your arms or allow them to sit on your lap when you are sitting in the front seat. Should there be an accident, the baby can be crushed between you and the dashboard or thrown out of the car.

For details about the use of child restraints, please refer to the following webpage of Transport Department:

https://www.td.gov.hk/en/road_safety/road_users_code/index/chapter_5_for_all_drivers/child_safety_in_cars/index.html

[#]<https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/142/5/e20182460>



Friendly reminder:

Let your baby be physically active several times a day in a variety of ways, particularly through interactive floor-based play; more is better

For baby not yet mobile, allow him have at least 30 minutes tummy time spread throughout the day while awake

Avoid prolong seating. Do not restrain your baby in pushchairs, high chairs, or baby carrier for more than 1 hour at a time

