

Slings and Carriers

Information for parents and families

The benefits of using a sling

- Parents are the best sensory environment for their babies. Holding your baby provides comforting touch, smell, taste, movement and body awareness. Your baby can hear your voice and see your face. This sensory input is essential for optimal development. It also helps meet your baby's need for a sense of security and attachment
- It helps to regulate temperature, heart and respiratory rates, and emotional and physical growth.
- It promotes and encourages the establishment of a successful breastfeeding relationship.
- It helps reduce crying, and can improve sleep. It is safe for your baby to sleep in the sling, if the airway is well protected.
- It allows your baby to retreat from an overwhelming world and snuggle into their parent's body for respite when needed.
- Carrying your baby and holding them close will not "spoil" them or make it hard for them to settle to sleep alone in the future. Remember it is physiologically impossible to spoil a baby.

What sling to use?

- Good, correctly designed slings that encourage the physiological spread-squat position (that mimics hip-perching) can help prevent hip problems later in life in those children at risk of hip dysplasia.
- Babies who are carried are less at risk of plagiocephaly (the flattening of the skull bones at the back of the head from prolonged periods lying on the back, more common since the "Back to Sleep" campaign).

Safety when wearing sling – REMEMBER T.I.C.K.S

- **Tight** - slings and carriers should be tight enough to hug your baby close to you as this will be most comfortable for you both.
- **In view at all times** - you should always be able to see your baby's face by simply glancing down.
- **Close enough to kiss** - your baby's head should be as close to your chin as is comfortable.
- **Keep chin off the chest** - a baby should never be curled so their chin is forced onto their chest as this can restrict their breathing.

- **Supported back** - in an upright carry a baby's back should be supported. If a sling is too loose they can slump which can partially close their airway.

What style of carrier to use?

There are many types of slings on the market, please look at <https://www.carryingmatters.co.uk/guide-to-slings/> for a clear guide of slings, how to use them and the benefits/drawbacks of each.

Stretch wraps

Stretch wraps are very useful for preterm babies and can be used from 32 weeks gestation, if your baby has been medically stable for 24 hours. Using these types of slings allows you to provide gentle movement, which is essential for your babies' development.

Like all carriers, stretchy slings need to be used safely and the TICKS guidelines should always be followed.

Please see the handout from www.babysense.com to learn how to wear this type of sling. Please speak to any member of the neonatal therapy team who will be able to help and advise with slings.

How do I make a comment about my visit?

We aim to provide the best possible service and staff will be happy to answer any of the questions you may have. If you have any **suggestions** or **comments** about your visit, please either speak to a member of staff or contact the patient advice and liaison service (**PALS**) on **020 3313 0088** (Charing Cross, Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's & Chelsea hospitals), or **020 3312 7777** (St Mary's and Western Eye hospitals). You can also email PALS at pals@imperial.nhs.uk. The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and is often able to help solve problems on your behalf.

Alternatively, you may wish to express your concerns in **writing** to:

Complaints department
Fourth floor
Salton House
St Mary's Hospital
Praed Street
London W2 1NY

Alternative formats

This leaflet can be provided on request in large print, as a sound recording, in Braille, or in alternative languages. Please contact the communications team on **020 3312 5592**.

We have a free and premium wi-fi service at each of our five hospitals. For further information please visit our website: www.imperial.nhs.uk

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