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MEDIA RELEASE

## **Baby wearing warning – hip and spine risks**

Baby wearing is an increasing trend amongst Australian parents as they ditch the pram in an effort to be closer to their baby, but Chiropractors are urging them to make sure the carrier adequately supports the babies' hips and spine.

Sydney Chiropractor Dr Vanessa Harrington is noticing a rise in the number of parents using a carrier in the outward facing position (where the baby faces away from the parent), which can lead to a risk of hip dysplasia or dislocation that may go undetected until walking age, and may also result in painful arthritis during adulthood.

“The outward facing of a baby who is less than 6 months of age<sup>1</sup> does not offer adequate support for developing hips as it may cause the legs to dangle inappropriately, stretching the hip joints, leading to an enhanced risk of hip dysplasia or dislocation.”

Dr Harrington said the outward facing position also has the potential to interfere with normal spinal curve development.

“Young babies have one big backwards C shaped curve in their spine, and poor head and neck control. Placing a baby in an outward facing position puts pressure on the spine by not supporting the head and neck adequately, and discouraging the development of normal healthy spinal curves.”

She said the absence of spinal curves reduces the strength and flexibility of the spine for life, and can delay normal milestone development.

Dr Harrington said the optimal hip positioning for the baby is in the squatting straddle ‘M’ position, with the hips flexed 100-110° and abducted (turned out) 45° away from the midline<sup>2</sup>. In this positioning the knees should be slightly higher than the hips.

“To support this in a baby carrier, the material supporting the bottom should also support the thighs, and the baby should be facing inwards so they can seek reassurance from their parents, and switch off from the surrounding world.”

She said an appropriately selected, fitted and utilised baby-wearing product will conform to the baby's natural spinal curves, providing good support, whilst neither forcing the spine into a more flexed or more extended position.

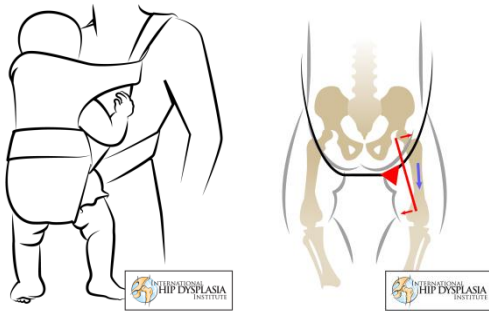
President of the Chiropractors' Association of Australia (NSW), Dr Kerein Earney said a number of celebrity parents such as Sarah Jessica Parker, Jessica Alba, Alanis Morissette, and Heidi Klum have all been photographed with their babies in the outward facing position, as well as the recently released movie “What to Expect When You're Expecting” featuring the carriers on the film cover.

“We’re not trying to deter parents from using baby wearing devices as they can be immensely beneficial by promoting healthy emotional, spine and nervous system development, but it’s really important that they are utilising them in the correct way.”

The CAANSW recommends parents should look for the following when selecting a baby-wearing product:

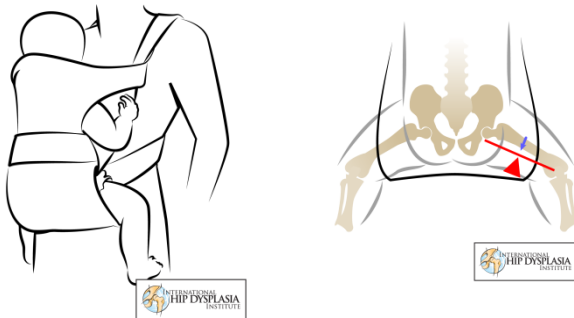
- Head and neck support for babies and sleeping infants/children
- Wide base of support that supports the thighs and flexes the knees
- Postural curves support
- Wide or cushioned adjustable shoulder straps
- Ability to distribute the baby’s weight evenly across the parents body
- Ease of loading/unloading, so that the parent can keep their spine in a neutral position.

### Not Recommended:



*Thigh NOT supported to the knee joint. The resulting forces on the hip joint may contribute to hip dysplasia.*

### Better:



*Thigh is supported to the knee joint. The forces on the hip joint are minimal because the legs are spread, supported, and the hip is in a more stable position.*

--ENDS--

\* Photograph/interview opportunities can be organised upon request.

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1. <http://www.hipdysplasia.org/Developmental-Dysplasia-Of-The-Hip/Prevention/Baby-Carriers-Seats-and-Other-Equipment/Default.aspx>
2. Sponseller P.D. 'Bone, Joint and Muscle Problems'. Gski, FA (ed). *Principles and Practice fo Pediatrics*, 2nd ed, Philadelphia; Lippincott, 1994:1035
3. Dr Rochelle L. Casses. 'Infant Carriers and Spinal Stress' 1996. *The Liedloff Society for the Continuum Concept*. [www.continuumconcept.org](http://www.continuumconcept.org)