

## A guide to baby carriers and slings

So you have decided to buy a sling to carry your baby? Welcome to the wonderful world of baby wearing. The next question is what type of sling will you choose? What are the differences? This article will guide you through the vast array of baby carriers that are now on the market. [Wraparound](#)

[Sling](#)

[Ring Sling](#)

[Pouch Sling](#)

[Soft Carrier and Backpack](#) **Wraparound Sling** This is probably the most versatile of all the slings. Wraparound slings are also called 'Simple Piece of Cloth' as they are constructed from a piece of fabric that is tied around your body ensuring that your baby is held securely in place. The wrap can be used to carry the baby in many different positions and offers a versatile travel system. A baby or toddler can be carried on the parent's front, back or hip or with shorter wraps they can be carried on one shoulder if desired. Most carries involve the sling being worn over both shoulders and often around the wearers waist in order to offer maximum support to the baby. Wrap baby slings are made from either a stretchy fabric or woven cloth. The length of the fabric varies but is usually between 2 and 6 metres long. The stretchy wraps are usually made from materials such as jersey or micro fleece and allow the baby to be lifted in and out of the sling as desired. This type of wrap is particular popular for young babies but they may not be as comfortable for the parent as the youngster gets heavier. Woven wrap baby slings are often available in a wide range of colours and designs. Cotton is the most common type of woven wrap available but hemp, silk, linen and wool are also used in their manufacture. Most weaves used provide some stretch allowing the fabric to conform to the baby and wearer's body. Woven wraps tend to give more support to heavier babies and toddlers. As the fabric is wrapped around your waist and shoulders, the baby's weight is well distributed which ensures that they are a comfortable choice for the wearer. They are particular suited if you suffer from back pain. It may take time to learn how to tie the sling correctly but the effort will be worthwhile. Excess fabric may be used for more discreet breastfeeding while the wrap may also double up as a blanket or changing mat while out and about.

**Ring Sling** This baby sling consists of a piece of fabric threaded through two rings, forming a loop. The cloth wraps around the wearer's body, from shoulder to the opposite hip and back up to the shoulder. The end of the fabric is then threaded through the rings to create a buckle effect. The baby can then be placed into the pocket of fabric in either a sitting or lying position. The sling can be taken off and put back into place without rethreading. The baby's weight creates tension on the fabric causing the friction between the fabric surfaces and the rings to lock the carrier in place. This type of sling is easily adjustable to suit different wearer's size and different wearing positions. Ring slings are available with padded shoulders, some models also have padded edges. Some rings slings also have a curved seat sewn into the fabric. A variety of fabrics is used in ring sling designs including cotton, hemp, rayon and silk brocade. Most commonly used are homespun fabrics and lightweight twills. It is important to ensure that the rings are sturdy and have been stitched repeatedly to the fabric. Ring slings can be used from birth and are also suitable for toddlers. They are an excellent sling for breastfeeding as they are adjustable allowing them to be lengthened to allow easy access to the nursing mother's breast. They can also be quickly adjusted once feeding is done.

**Pouch Sling** Pouch slings are probably some of the easiest slings to use. They are formed by a wide piece of cloth sewn into a tubular shape. Simple pouches do not tend to have rings, adjustable pouches may adjust using a variety of methods including zips, buckles and press-studs. Most pouches have a curve sewn into the fabric that will hold the baby more securely in place. The sling is slipped over the wearer's head and worn sash-style across the body. Most baby wearers find that they adapt to using the pouch sling very quickly. Pouch slings can be used from baby to toddler and are an excellent choice for situations in which the baby is frequently removed from the pouch and being placed back into it. The asymmetrical weight distribution can make carrying heavier children more challenging. . Pouch slings offer excellent value for money and are relatively easy to make.

**Soft Carrier and Backpack** Many different types of sling fall into the soft carriers and backpack category. Although there are many different types of designs most are structured and often have shoulder straps and waist straps. Some of these carriers are suitable from birth and there are models that are ideal for carrying older children. If you're not sure, double check with the vendor. Some carriers are closed with buckles. Chinese inspired mei-tai are tied at the waist and under the baby's bottom. They are usually quick to put on and can be a good option for heavy toddlers. Now that you understand the different types of sling that are available on the market it is time to consider which option will best suit you and your family. Things to take into consideration will include how you wish to wear the sling, whether you intend to keep the baby in the sling or keep removing from the sling, if you require a sling to provide discreet breastfeeding and also how willing you are to practise using your sling until you get it right. Armed with this information it just remains to wish you and your child many hours of very happy baby wearing!

## About the Author

Anne Dhir is the owner of <http://www.calinbleu.com>, a company specialising in comfortable baby carriers and <http://www.slingmeet.co.uk>, a forum where parents can meet up with other sling parents locally.

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