

Die TrageZeitung - Neuigkeiten aus dem Netzwerk für Trageberatung

Safety when Babywearing.

Recently there have been headlines about safety concerns specifically concerning slings and baby carriers, and there have even been a couple of slings recalled in the USA and Europe. In the USA the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) is looking to implement voluntary sling safety standards in the USA with a view to making them mandatory in the future.

Is using a sling safe? Of course, saying yes is the easy answer. Explaining why to a new parent is not always as straight forward. In this article we want to explore the ways we ensure safety when using a sling and how to use that information when communicating with others.

Correct positioning

As consultants we sometimes take safe, correct positioning for granted, it is what we live and breathe every day. The research of the CPSC has put consultants back on edge about safety when babywearing. It has made it clear that we can't take it for granted; we need to be on top of the safety subject at all times.

Let's take a look at the three criteria we use and how they make sure that the way children are positioned in a sling is safe.¹

- 1) Does the carrying aid material nestle around the child's back nice and tightly so that the spine is simultaneously well supported and also held in its round posture?
- 2) Does the carrying aid enable the legs to be in the squat-spread position so that the correct hip positioning and a rounded spinal posture are enabled? In doing so, the material between the legs must reach from back of knee to back of knee, and guarantee that the

child's knees remain at bellybutton height in a relaxed condition.

3) Does the carrying aid enable the carrier to distribute the child's weight evenly across their own body? This increases carrying comfort and enables parents to enjoy carrying their child.

A well supported back in combination with the squat-spread position and if needed a rolled up molton in a child's neck make sure that a child's chin can't slump down to the chest. Tightening is not only to make the carry more comfortable, but also to ensure that carrying is safe.

We have to make sure that whenever we teach people how to carry that they understand the safety aspect that is behind the above three criteria. A consultation will be even more successful if people fully understand the reasoning behind the three criteria and can apply them whilst carrying.

The main safety concern with positioning appears to revolve around the cradle position, specifically the possibility that the infants chin rests on their chest. When this happens it becomes harder to breathe, which in a worst case scenario can lead to suffocation. Try to put your own chin on your chest and you will soon notice how much harder it becomes to breathe.

M'Liss, a neonatal nurse in the USA, has done extensive research into so called 'bag slings', which is published on her blog <http://babyslingsafety.blogspot.com/>. Although she focused her research on 'bagslings' it is possible to apply some of it to other types of slings as well, especially when looking at the cradle position.

When looking at the three criteria for correct positioning when using the cradle carry:

- 1) The back is not well supported and the baby is not lying in a rounded position for optimal spinal support.
- 2) No squat-spread position. Therefore the hips are not in a correct position.
- 3) The child's weight is not distributed evenly across the body of both child and parent. It can become uncomfortable for the parent quickly and that decreases the joy of babywearing.

The position does not look relaxed for both parent and child. This position can be dangerous especially for newborn babies. They do not have the strength or reflexes to get their airways free when their chin is on their chest. Another issue is that mothers want to breast-

¹ Taken from Page 24 from the English reader (Die drei Kriterien sind die Basis des sicheren Tragens von Kindern formuliert im „Das Handbuch für die Trageberatung“ Ulrike Höwer, Die Trageschule: Eltern sollten eine Tragehilfe auf folgende drei Punkte hin prüfen:

1. Schmiegt sich der Stoff der Tragehilfe so fest um den Rücken des Kindes, das die Wirbelsäule gleichzeitig gut abgestützt und unterstützt wird?
2. Ermöglicht die Tragehilfe eine Sitz-Hock-Stellung der Beine, um eine korrekte Hüftstellung zu erreichen und die Wirbelsäule in ihrer physiologischen Haltung zu unterstützen? Das Material zwischen den Beinen muss hierbei von Kniekehle zu Kniekehle reichen, und gewährleisten, dass die Knie des Kindes auch im entspannten Zustand auf Bauchnabelhöhe des Kindes bleiben.
3. Ermöglicht die Tragehilfe, das Gewicht des Kindes gleichmäßig auf den Körper des Trägers zu verteilen? Dies erhöht den Tragekomfort und ermöglicht Eltern ihr Kind mit Freude zu tragen.

Die TrageZeitung - Neuigkeiten aus dem Netzwerk für Trageberatung

The **T.I.C.K.S.** Rule for Safe Babywearing

Keep your baby close and keep your baby safe.

When you're wearing a sling or carrier, don't forget the **T.I.C.K.S.**



- ✓ **TIGHT**
- ✓ **IN VIEW AT ALL TIMES**
- ✓ **CLOSE ENOUGH TO KISS**
- ✓ **KEEP CHIN OFF THE CHEST**
- ✓ **SUPPORTED BACK**



TIGHT – slings and carriers should be tight enough to hug your baby close to you as this will be most comfortable for you both. Any slack/loose fabric will allow your baby to slump down in the carrier which can hinder their breathing and pull on your back.



IN VIEW AT ALL TIMES – you should always be able to see your baby's face by simply glancing down. The fabric of a sling or carrier should not close around them so you have to open it to check on them. In a cradle position your baby should face upwards not be turned in towards your body.



CLOSE ENOUGH TO KISS – your baby's head should be as close to your chin as is comfortable. By tipping your head forward you should be able to kiss your baby on the head or forehead.



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. Ensure there is always a space of at least a finger width under your baby's chin.



SUPPORTED BACK – in an upright carry a baby should be held comfortably close to the wearer so their back is supported in its natural position and their tummy and chest are against you. If a sling is too loose they can slump which can partially close their airway. (This can be tested by placing a hand on your baby's back and pressing gently - they should not uncurl or move closer to you.) A baby in a cradle carry in a pouch or ring sling should be positioned carefully with their bottom in the deepest part so the sling does not fold them in half pressing their chin to their chest.

TICKS – easy to follow guidelines for safe positioning by <http://www.babyslingsafe.com/>