

# Wearing Your Baby

Babies are built to be carried. A baby's instincts tell him that he isn't safe on his own, so he cries to be held. His heart rate and breathing are less stable when he's alone. And our milk, unlike the milk of rabbits or other leave-them-in-the-nest mammals, is tailored for frequent nursing - no problem if we're already holding the baby.

Wearing a baby is healthy and cheap. If manufacturers can convince parents that human contact isn't adequate or easy, they can sell strollers, cribs, heartbeat teddies, intercoms, infant seats, swings, playpens... the list is endless. But separation is good for business, not babies.

Wearing your baby just means getting out an old shawl, length of cloth, or purchased sling, and going on with your life. Tying your baby on means your baby won't tie you down! Mothers find they have more energy for loving when they put less energy into separating. At home, your baby has the comfort of constant holding and the brain-building stimulation of constantly changing sights and positions, rather than being stored in a swing with a pacifier for excitement. On the go, doors and stairs are no problem, and the sling can offer privacy when he wants to snack in the checkout line. Your baby is at eye level with the grown-up world, and you'll find that everyone includes him in conversation - another major brain-builder - while they ignore the baby down in a stroller.

Your breasts are more comfortable when you nurse frequently - easy to do when you wear your baby - and he won't have to feel over-full or over-empty if he snacks off and on through the day. The many small meals and the motion of your body also help his digestion. With his stress-free meals and sense of security, you'll probably have the most contented baby on the block, which will make him more fun for everyone.

You'll find that you can get more done in your own life if you don't restrict nursing to major meals at major intervals, and you'll find that there's hardly any place your in-arms baby can't go. All a baby really wants or needs is this "absent-minded but present-bodied" mothering; your mind will be free for other things, and you won't fret about how your baby is doing. You'll know.

Slings are easier and more versatile than carriers with straps and buckles, and a sling will fit your baby into toddlerhood. It's not a hammock; it should hug your baby against your body, so don't pull up much fabric on the "inside". Hold a tiny baby's back and armpit through the sling fabric as you settle him into position, so he doesn't get lost, and walk around to settle him. If he doesn't enjoy it, talk to an experienced sling user. It's the method, not the sling. Older babies like to sit facing out, or perched on your hip. Babies enjoy being "worn" through their first year and beyond. That's why you often see parents pushing an empty stroller and carrying its occupant.

A fictional gorilla described his group's feeding pattern this way:

"Wherever one turns, there is something wonderful to eat. One never thinks, 'Oh, I'd better look for some food.' Food is everywhere, and one picks it up almost absentmindedly, as one takes a breath of air. In fact, one does not think of feeding as a distinct activity at all. Rather, it's like a delicious music that plays in the background of all activities throughout the day." *Ishmael*  
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What a wonderful way to start life! And you can offer it to your baby - in your arms.

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