

# PURCHASING A CARRIER

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*Updated by Courtney Hughes and Melissa Victoria, November 2007*

## **Pouch**



A pouch is a popular first carrier because it is simply a tube of fabric without rings, buckles or straps to adjust. Also, a pouch is small and lightweight so it's easy to wear around the house and pop baby in and out. Since it does not have a tail, pouches also offer a streamlined look. Sizing a fitted pouch is very important for getting a comfortable fit.

*Pictured: Hotslings Pouch*

## **Ring Sling**



Compared to a pouch, a ring sling does take longer to learn. However, despite the learning curve, ring slings do have a few advantages over a pouch: they are easier to breastfeed in, the tail makes a great nursing cover-up or blanket, they are more adjustable and they offer better head support for a sleeping child.

*Pictured: ZoloWear Ring Sling*

## **Asian-style Carrier**



Asian-style carriers are more comfortable when carrying for long periods of time because they distribute the child's weight across the wearer's shoulders, waist and upper body. Mei tais are a popular type of Asian-style carrier.

Another popular type in this category is a soft structured carrier. These are mei tai inspired carriers with buckles, padded shoulder straps and a padded, stiff waist/hip belt.

*Pictured: Kozy Mei Tai*

## **Wrap**



Wraps are another type of two-shouldered carrier that is comfortable to wear for long periods of time and with heavier children. Essentially long pieces of fabric, wraps are the most versatile of baby carriers, but have the steepest learning curve. Stretchy wraps are easier to learn but have a lower weight limit than woven wraps.

*Pictured: EllaRoo Wrap*

## Which Type of Carrier?

Depending on the length of time you plan on carrying your child, it's nice to have a pouch and/or ring sling plus an Asian-style and/or wrap because each are useful in different situations. A pouch or ring sling is terrific for quick trips to the store or around the house when the child(ren) want up and down. A soft structured carrier, mei tai or wrap is useful for extended carries like grocery shopping, hiking or when caring for a sick child.

### **More Information**

For additional information on choosing a carrier go to [www.thebabywearer.com](http://www.thebabywearer.com). Scroll down the home page until you reach "How this site can help you with babywearing." If you click on "Choosing a Baby Carrier" it will bring up a page of articles. Or log onto [www.slingbabies.org](http://www.slingbabies.org).

## Where to Purchase

### **Locally**

Babies R Us, Latham NY, (NoJo padded ring slings and Ultimate baby wrap)

Bella Maternity, 22 Clifton Country Rd., Clifton Park, 383-0103 (Hotsling pouches)

Breastchester, Saratoga Springs NY, 1-888-225-7512 (peanut shell pouch, moby wrap)

[www.californiababestuff.com](http://www.californiababestuff.com), Ballston Spa (Moby wrap, Maya Wrap)

Saratoga Slings, Saratoga Springs NY, [info@saratogaslings.com](mailto:info@saratogaslings.com) (Ellaroo, Kozy and Maya Wrap)

Haute Mama Maternity, 27 Church St., Saratoga NY, 691-0395 (sells for Saratoga Slings)

Target (Moby wrap, Hotsling in some locations)

### **Surrounding Area**

Sprouts, 57 Elliot St. Brattleboro VT, (full line of carriers)

A Child's Garden, 204 Main St. Northampton, MA, (full line of carriers)

**Online:** For those interested in looking at several different carriers there are several online stores that stock a variety of types and brands. For store listings and independent reviews, go to [www.thebabywearer.com](http://www.thebabywearer.com) and click on "product directory."

**Used/Low Price:** For those who do not want to pay full price, the FSOT (For Sale or Trade) is a great place to get new and gently used carriers.

[www.thebabywearer.com](http://www.thebabywearer.com),

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/BabywearingSWAP/>,

<http://www.diaperswappers.com/forum/index.php>

**Make Your Own:** If you can sew, there is a "Do It Yourself" forum on [www.thebabywearer.com](http://www.thebabywearer.com) with instructions for making your own pouch, ring sling, mei tai, etc. Sleeping Baby Productions also offers free patterns and detailed instructions for making your own carriers.

[www.sleepingbaby.net/jan/Baby/](http://www.sleepingbaby.net/jan/Baby/)

**What Not to Buy:** Please beware of inexpensive and/or mass produced carriers. These carriers may be budget priced but they can also be budget designed, only useful for a very short period of time and some people find them difficult to use. Also, be very careful purchasing carriers on eBay. You usually get what you pay for, and a used "brand name" carrier may be a better deal than a "brand new" cheap carrier. Keep in mind, a fabric baby carrier is going to help you hold your most precious possession: your child. You will want to invest in a carrier that will not only be safe and comfortable but also be *the* piece of baby gear you will use for years to come.

# Pouch Slings

## **Fitted Pouches**

**Hotslings**, [www.hotslings.com](http://www.hotslings.com) Very popular brand, 9 sizes, leg padding and wide selection of fabrics. Instructional DVD included.

**Peanut Shell**, [www.goo-ga.com](http://www.goo-ga.com) 5 sizes, pocket with toy ring, padded bottom rail, microfleece and cotton fabric available.

**Slingings**, [www.slingings.com](http://www.slingings.com) Wide selection of stretch cotton fabrics, 10 sizes, leg padding optional and excellent sizing and wearing instructions.

## **Adjustable Pouches**

**Kangaroo Korner**, [www.kangarookorner.com](http://www.kangarookorner.com) Adjustable (snaps) cotton and fleece. Pouch is fairly deep. Fleece is their most popular.

**Mom and Me Creations**, [www.mom-and-me-creations.com](http://www.mom-and-me-creations.com) "Pea in a Pod" adjustable pouch (snaps) made of lightweight hemp fleece.

**Rockin' Baby Adjustable Pouch**, [www.rockinbabysling.com](http://www.rockinbabysling.com) In addition to the Rockin' Baby sling, an adjustable pouch is a new offering. Adjusts using zippers and are reversible. Comes with leg padding. A unique feature is that the S/M size fits a very wide range of people and for those outside the range, a XS and M/L size is offered.

## **Buying a Pouch**

With a fitted pouch the correct size is very important. If the pouch is not the right size either it will be very difficult to get your child in (too small), or your back and shoulder will ache because the child is hanging too low (too big). To determine your pouch size you will need to know your bra size (or chest measurement), weight and height and a shoulder to hip\* measurement.

\* Customer service at Hotslings advises to "Measure from the ball of your shoulder (top) to the top of your opposite hip bone diagonally." When measuring, shift your weight and push your hip outward as if you were going to carry a child on your hip. The "shelf" created by your hip is where your tape measure should end. (If you are pregnant, measure across your back instead of your front.)

One disadvantage of a fitted pouch is that it is not very forgiving of dramatic weight gain or loss. Think pregnancy. There is hope for mamas who want to lose those post-pregnancy pounds but don't want to lose the use of their sling. Most single layer, *not pre-washed* pouches will shrink if washed in warm or hot and/or placed in the dryer. If you are worried about exactly how to go about shrinking a pouch you can contact the company and they will be happy to help.

For those of you that plan on having more babies, an adjustable pouch, ring sling or mei tai or wrap will be more adaptable to pregnancy weight changes than a fitted pouch.

Another aspect to choosing a pouch is leg padding. If you have a large baby, or plan on carrying a heavy toddler, padding under the child's thighs (padded leg rail) or at least a soft ribbon edging or serged edge is going to keep the pouch from digging into the child's legs.

## **Pouch Wearing Instructions**

These web sites offer excellent instructions that can be applied to wearing most pouches:

Hotslings, [www.hotslings.com](http://www.hotslings.com)

Slingings, [www.slingings.com](http://www.slingings.com)

# Ring Slings

## Unpadded slings

**Kalea Baby**, [www.kaleababy.com](http://www.kaleababy.com) Detailed stitching on shoulder and/or rails and some with accents. Pocket secures with Velcro. Shoulder a combination of pleats and gathers.

**Oopa**, [www.oopababy.com](http://www.oopababy.com) Sophisticated looking slings with accent and zippered pocket on the tail. Pleated shoulder. Comes in regular or petite lengths.

**Sakura Bloom**, [www.sakurabloom.com](http://www.sakurabloom.com) Machine washable, double layer dupioni (silk) or linen slings. Silk slings are reversible. Gathered shoulder.

**Taylormade**, [www.taylormadeslings.com](http://www.taylormadeslings.com) Variety of fabric options ranging from cotton and lino to silk dupioni slings. Organic cotton mesh sling is a popular summer sling option. Stretch cotton and silk batiks come with pockets. Wide hot dog shoulder style .

**Zolowear**, [www.zolowear.com](http://www.zolowear.com) Well known for their silk brocade slings but also offers stretch cotton slings. Zippered pocket and toy ring included. Narrower hot dog shoulder style with flaps that open to cup your shoulder. Instructional DVD included.

## Lightly Padded Slings

**Maya Wrap**, [www.mayawrap.com](http://www.mayawrap.com) Made of Guatemalan, hand loomed fabrics. The new Maya has a lightly padded shoulder. Zippered pocket on tail. Instructional DVD included.

**EllaRoo**, [www.ellaroo.com](http://www.ellaroo.com) Very light padding on shoulder and rails. Available in solid and print fabrics. Organic cotton with recycled polyester batting in the rails.

## Buying a Ring Sling

When choosing a ring sling the size will refer to how long the sling is. Is you take a tape measure and loosely loop it from one shoulder, down to your hip, then around your back, returning to your shoulder, (like a Miss America sash) you will get an approximate idea of how much fabric you will need in the ring sling. (Remember baby will take up space as well.) What is left will be tail. For example, if you measure 52" around, and the sling is 70", the tail will be *approximately* 18" long.

For those of you interested in a ring sling for carrying a heavy toddler or child the most comfortable fabrics are single or double layer silks or German woven wraps that have been "slingified," or converted to slings. "Slingified" wraps can be found on the FSOT (For Sale or Trade) board on TheBabywearer.com or check this site for a list of people who can convert your wrap into a ring sling. <http://www.sleepingbaby.net/shop/slingifiers.php>

## Ring Sling Wearing Instructions

Zolowear, [www.zolowear.com](http://www.zolowear.com) has the most comprehensive information of any website out there. Tip, tricks, how to thread your ring sling, different positions, etc as well as great videos.

Oopa, [www.oopababy.com](http://www.oopababy.com) also features a terrific online video.

Sleeping Baby Productions, [www.sleepingbaby.net](http://www.sleepingbaby.net), has good instructions with still photos.

# Asian-Style Carriers

## Mei Tais

**Babies Beyond Borders Mei Favorite**, [www.babiesbeyondborders.com](http://www.babiesbeyondborders.com) Padded waist belt with buckle and wide shoulder straps (For back carries the shoulder straps are meant to be crossed on the chest.) Lightly padded headrest. Narrow bodied Baby version for babies who want legs out and facing in or out. Toddler version with wide, tall body.

**Ball Baby**, [www.haveaballbaby.com](http://www.haveaballbaby.com) Medium-sized carrier with a square body and wide, unpadded shoulder and waist straps. (For back carries the shoulder straps are meant to be worn crossed over the chest.)

**BabyHawk**, [www.babyhawk.com](http://www.babyhawk.com) Medium sized, square bodied mei tai with a padded, flip-up headrest and padded shoulder straps. Toddler sized version available as well as optional accessories and customizations. Options include: one or two pockets, toy ring, and minkee (fuzzy, soft lining).

**CatBird Baby**, [www.catbirdbaby.com](http://www.catbirdbaby.com) Medium bodied. Has a cinch strap to narrow the bottom of the carrier so baby can have legs out. Shoulder straps are more vertical which makes this mei tai an especially good fit for a parent with small and/or sloping shoulders.

**Freehand Baby**, [www.freehandbaby.com](http://www.freehandbaby.com) Small bodied. Small body means it wouldn't be necessary to roll the bottom for a newborn or petite child. Can be used with a big baby or toddler but would be more work to get good head support should the child fall asleep (as compared to a larger bodied mei tai). Comfortable for a variety of body types but especially for a petite momma.

**Kozy**, [www.kozycarrier.com](http://www.kozycarrier.com) The "gold standard" and one of the most popular mei tais. Large body. May need to roll the bottom in order to use with a newborn or small child. Canvas body and straps. Small pocket at the end of the waist strap for a credit card, etc. Pocket option on the mei tai body. Very supportive carrier for a heavy toddler or older child. Some petite mommas (under 5'2") find the large, tall body on the Kozy overwhelming.

**Mei Tai Baby**, [www.meitaibaby.com](http://www.meitaibaby.com) Adjustable option narrows the bottom of the carrier body so that baby can be facing out. "Zippy" mei tai baby allows for interchangeable panels on the body of the carrier

**Sachi**, [www.sachicarriers.com](http://www.sachicarriers.com) Medium bodied. Shoulder straps more heavily padded and a bit wider than most mei tais. Leg padding for under baby's thighs. Sachi also carries onbuhimos with a flip up headrest.

## Soft Structured Carriers

**Beco**, [www.becobabycarrier.com](http://www.becobabycarrier.com) Detachable sleeping hood. Available in designer fabrics. Body is small which makes it a better fit for newborns to children less than 3 years of age. Recommended optional infant insert to use for babies without head control.

**Patapum**, [www.patapum.com](http://www.patapum.com) Tuck away mesh head rest. Infant and Toddler versions available. Attachable accessories include a mini-waist bag or small waist pack. Solid color fabrics (Available from several U.S. distributors.)

**TenToes Click**, [www.tentoes.com](http://www.tentoes.com) Swaddle pocket for a newborn. Unpadded waist belt. Slightly contoured body (wider at the top and narrower at the bottom). Pocket on the body of the carrier  
\*This carrier is suitable for very petite wearers – even those slightly under 5'.

## Buying an Asian-Style Carrier

A mei tai has very few sizing constraints, which makes it an especially good choice for two different-sized parents who want to use the same carrier.

A soft-structured carrier has a shorter learning curve (buckles instead of tying) however it has to be adjusted for each user. Another limitation of soft structured carriers is that they are often not a good fit for parents that are not a “medium build”. Petite parents (generally under 5’4”) often find the straps to be too long \* and plus sized parents find the straps to be too short. They do not offer as versatile carrying options as a mei tai.

### **Asian-style Carrier Wearing Instructions**

Learning to use an Asian-style carrier is a lot like learning to tie your shoes; it takes a little time to become proficient. It is possible to use an Asian-style carrier right away, however it can take a few tries until tying the carrier becomes comfortable. The best way to practice, especially before attempting a back carry with your child, is to first use a doll or stuffed animal. Once tying the carrier “feels right” then, standing over a soft surface, secure your child in the carrier.

### **Mei Tai Wearing Instructions**

Kozy, [www.kozycarrier.com](http://www.kozycarrier.com),

Freehand, [www.freehandbaby.com](http://www.freehandbaby.com)

The Cat’s Meow, [www.jenncatsmeow.com](http://www.jenncatsmeow.com).

See [www.the-ergo-lady.com](http://www.the-ergo-lady.com) for soft structured carrier instructions and tips.

# Wraps

## **A Word about Wraps**

A wrap distributes the child's weight across the entire upper body, which makes this type of carrier insanely comfortable, even when carrying an older child. Wraps are also extremely versatile making it possible to accomplish any carry (front, back, hip cradle, etc.), are terrific for hands free, discrete breastfeeding and, in addition, can be used as a sunshade, picnic blanket or toddler leash. If you are on a budget, or only want one carrier to do it all, a wrap could be a good choice.

That said, the down side to wraps is the size. Due to its lack of structure (after all a wrap is just a very, very long piece of fabric) most moms find a wrap to have a steeper learning curve than most any other carrier – especially for back carries. This type of carrier can also be warm to wear, especially in the summer, because of all the fabric wrapped around the upper body.

## **Choosing a Wrap**

**Stretchy wraps** are best for newborns up to approximately 18 lbs; a heavy child will stretch the wrap to a point where it isn't very supportive. A stretchy wrap is wonderful for a newborn because the wrap can be pre-tied and the baby can be popped in and out easily. Stretchy wraps include:

**Moby Wrap**, [www.mobywrap.com](http://www.mobywrap.com)

**Hug-A-Bub**, [www.hugabub.com](http://www.hugabub.com)

**Joey Wrap**, [www.joeywrap.com](http://www.joeywrap.com)

**"Hybrid" wraps** are slightly stretchy (easier to get child in and/or out) but also supportive enough for a larger child. Popular hybrids include:

**Hot Mama**, [www.mom-and-me-creations.com](http://www.mom-and-me-creations.com)

**Gypsy Mama Bali Baby Stretch**, [www.gypsymama.com](http://www.gypsymama.com)

**Summer weight wraps** are made of thinner, breathable fabrics. A thinner wrap is less hot to wear but also less cushioned for the wearer. They are usually comfortable until the child is around 2 years old. Some summer weight wraps are:

**EllaRoo**, [www.ellaroo.com](http://www.ellaroo.com) A medium weight wrap made of hand-woven, Guatemalan cotton.

**Gypsy Mama Bali Baby Breeze**, [www.gypsymama.com](http://www.gypsymama.com) Hand-dyed batik gauze wrap.

**Vatanai**, [www.vatanai.cz](http://www.vatanai.cz) German-style woven wrap manufactured in the Czech Republic (click "English" on the website). Available in the U.S. at [www.lemonbalmessentials.com](http://www.lemonbalmessentials.com).

**German-style wraps** are especially comfortable when carrying a heavy toddler or child. Two of the more popular brands are **Didymos** and **Storchenwiege**. They are both heavier weight German wraps with a complex weave to give just the right amount of stretch/support. **Hoppediz** and **Girasol** are also fairly popular and at a slightly lower price than Didymos.

German-style wraps are available at many on-line vendors.

## **Wrap Wearing Instructions**

See [www.wearyourbaby.com](http://www.wearyourbaby.com) for photos, video streams and tips on making your own wrap.