

Unfounded fear of postural damage by carrying

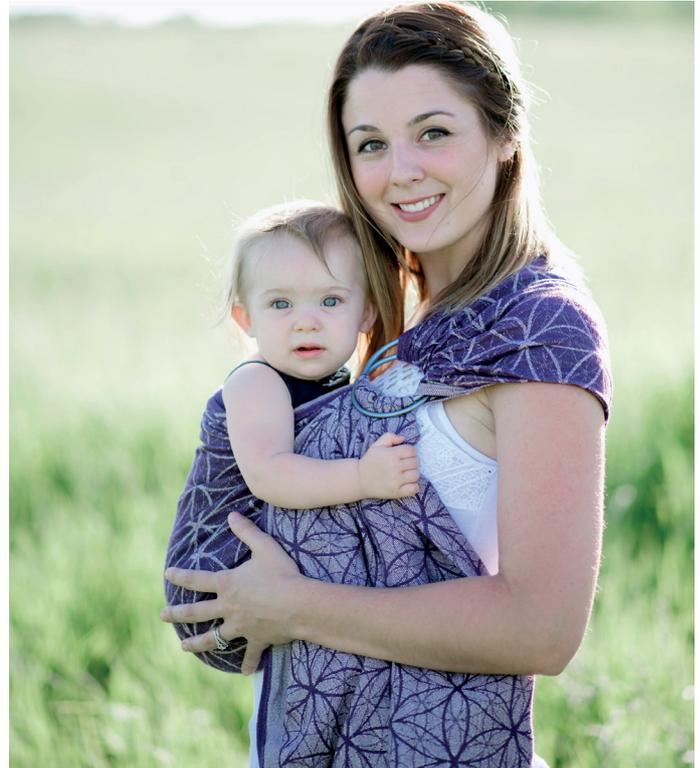
Dr. Evelin Kirkilionis, Behavioural Biologist

Very often parents who want to carry their child in carrying devices or carrying slings are warned that it may cause spinal damage, especially if they want to start carrying before the child is able to sit unaided.

A longitudinal study of 192 children (Kirkilionis, 1989, 1992) of carrying methods, demonstrating the daily duration of carrying and the start of carrying showed no relationship between carrying in the upright position and an increase in postural damage. There was no increase in the number of spinal abnormalities in children who spent 2 to 2 1/2 hours a day in carrying devices nor among infants who were carried for 4, 5, 6 or more hours daily – some from as early as the first week of life. None of the children later showed postural abnormalities which could be attributed to early carrying.

However, by the age of school entry 4 of the 192 children showed slight postural abnormalities which needed no treatment: 2 siblings, who had been carried for 1 1/2 to 2 1/2 hours a day starting from 6 months old showed a slight rounding of their backs. Another pair of siblings presented with a slight scoliosis that had occurred several times on the mothers side. One of these children had been carried between 1 and 2 hours a day, the other 6 to 8 hours (3 further siblings, who had also spent 6 to 8 hours a day as early as in the first two weeks in carrying devices, showed no postural abnormalities) (Kirkilionis 1994a).

The number of postural abnormalities in the children of the study does not exceed the percentage of such abnormalities of children at school starting age. This shows that the fear of postural damage is unfounded. There is therefore no need to fear spinal damage in the children.



Quite often there were questions regarding back problems for the mothers in the questionnaires. The strain on the back which increases naturally with the growing weight of the child intensifies previously present back problems of the mothers or develops them at that time. This is especially the case if the weight of the child is relatively high when the mother starts carrying.

It is therefore also a good idea for these parents to start carrying early, because the lower early weight of a baby limits the strain on the carrying person. The mother can slowly become accustomed to the increasing demand on her body by the growing weight of her child. This results in a kind of firming of the body which at least reduces the strain of carrying.

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