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"treating the cause of your problem, not just the symptoms"

Tips on Baby-Carriers

As a father of two girls under the age of three, I believe that parents should try to get as much "quality time" with their children as possible. As a chiropractor, I also believe that you should get out and exercise regularly. To accomplish both of these goals, it is inevitable that your children go with you at times when you are exercising.

With new products unheard of a generation ago - like baby carriers and slings - even the tiniest among us are able to enjoy the great outdoors. As many parents know, backpack-style or front-side baby carriers can be effective tools for toting your little one while walking, hiking, or even getting groceries. But, while these items can make life easier and more enjoyable for both parent and child, they can be the cause of pain and injury if not used properly.

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Although I have one myself, there are risks involved with the popular backpack-style carrier. Because the neck (cervical spine) of a child less than a year old is not fully developed, it's important at that age that the head does not bob around. The backpack-type carrier is not ideal because the parent cannot watch to make sure the child's head is stable. So, a front-side carrier is better for a very young child. As well, a backpack-style or front-side carrier decreases a parent's stability when walking or hiking. It is critical that a parent is in good shape and is accustomed to wearing it before attempting to use one of these products.

The "baby sling" is becoming more and more popular thanks to its versatility of positions and comfort. But, if you wish to use a baby sling, keep in mind that it is intended only for very young infants. There are other concerns as well. A baby can become very hot inside the sling, so be mindful of the temperature of the child and the environment you are in. As well, make certain the baby's breathing is clear and unobstructed by the sling's material.

Regardless of the type of baby carrier you choose, make sure to select one with wide straps for your shoulders and waist. This will help distribute the carrier's weight

evenly and prevent neck muscle and joint injuries. When the carrier is worn properly, the shoulder straps should fit comfortably over the center of your collarbone. Once you place the child in the carrier, check to make sure there is no bunching of material against the child's body, particularly on the back, buttocks and spine. Isolated, uneven pressure like this can produce pain for the child. Never run or jog while carrying a baby in any backpack-style carrier, front-side carrier or baby sling. A baby's body is not accustomed to the cyclic pattern that is a part of running and jogging. This motion can do damage to the baby's neck, spine, and even his or her brain.

If you or your child experiences any pain or discomfort resulting from these or other outdoor activities, call your doctor of chiropractic. Doctors of chiropractic are licensed and trained to diagnose and treat patients of all ages, and can provide health tips for you and your children that will make enjoying outdoor activities safer and more enjoyable.