

# Safety Fact Sheet

## Baby and Child Carriers

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### Description:

Carriers are slings, pouches or backpacks in which babies and children may be carried. Carriers may be strapped to an adult's torso and worn on the front, or strapped to the back of an adult, similar to a "back-pack". Carriers allow parents and carers to hold babies and children while having their hands free. Slings worn on the front may be used from birth to approximately 12 months of age. It is recommended that children over the age of one year are carried using a back carrier in order to offer greater security.

### Potential Hazards:

#### Falls

- Children may fall out of the carrier while it is being adjusted.
- Babies may slip down through wide leg openings and fall to the ground.
- Children may sustain a fall as a result of the parent or carer tripping over or falling while using a carrier.
- Children may fall to the ground when faulty straps or harnesses break.

### Injuries:

While baby carriers can be a big help to parents and carers, they have also been associated with injury to children. When children fall out of a carrier, it is often from a significant height which can cause serious injury to the baby or child. According to the National Electronic Injury Surveillance System, there were 51 injuries related to adult-worn child carriers between January 1990 and September 1998 in the USA.<sup>2</sup> Of these injuries, 74.5% were head traumas and 15.7% were facial traumas.

Data collected between 1990-1995 in 10 paediatric and six general hospitals in the UK showed that there were 105 sling related injuries reported. Over 44% of the injuries involved babies less than six months of age. One third of the injuries occurred at home, while the others occurred on roads, sidewalks or in parking areas.<sup>1</sup> Approximately 35% of injuries occurred when the person carrying them tripped or fell; 19% occurred when the baby fell out of the carrier while being carried; 19% occurred while the child was in the carrier which was not being worn; and 5.7% of injuries occurred while the carrier was being put on or taken off. The majority of these were to the head or face.

### Law or Australian Standard:

There are no laws or Australian Standards relating to carriers. Please keep in mind the safety reminders below when choosing any type of carrier.

### Remember:

- Look for carriers which have tags indicating the suitable weight and height for that particular carrier.
- Try the carrier on before purchasing it to make sure it fits firmly.
- All straps should be easily adjustable with one hand.
- Ensure your child fits snugly in the carrier.

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- Use body straps and limb restraints to hold your child in position.
- Use your arms to keep your child close to your body if wearing a front carrier.
- Take care when putting on and taking off the carrier.