

Injury alert: Soft infant carriers and slings

Please post, distribute, and discuss with clients who are use soft infant carriers and slings

Health Canada is advising parents and caregivers to exercise caution when using infant slings and soft infant carriers. Injuries tend to happen when:

- the baby falls from the sling or soft carrier when the caregiver trips and falls;
- the product malfunctions or its hardware breaks;
- the baby slips and falls over the side or through the leg openings; or
- the baby suffocates as a result of improper positioning of the baby or product use.

Before each use, parents should examine the sling or soft carrier for ripped seams, torn straps or damaged hardware and make sure it is secure before placing the baby in it. Babies in these products should be checked on frequently to ensure that there is a supply of fresh air, that the baby's airway is not obstructed, that the head is above the sling and that the face is visible.

Suffocation can happen when the baby's nose or mouth presses against the product's fabric or the caregiver's body, restricting breathing. The design of some slings forces the baby into a curled position forcing their head to bend towards the chest, potentially restricting the child's airway. Caregivers should not zip up their coats around a baby in a sling or soft carrier to keep the baby warm.

A baby can suffocate in less than a minute and as consciousness is lost, the infant will likely not be able to cry for help. Premature babies or those with pre-existing medical conditions, such as a cold, are especially at risk of suffocation. Caregivers consult their paediatrician prior to using a sling or soft carrier.

Infant slings and soft carriers have led to serious injuries of babies. Since 1995, nine incidents, including two deaths in soft infant carriers, have been reported to Health Canada. Over the past 20 years, the [U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission](#) has identified 14 suffocation deaths linked to the use of sling-style infant carriers.

Incidents should be reported to the regional Health Canada Product Safety office by calling toll free 1-866-662-0666 or by e-mail at cps-spc@hc.gc.ca (callers should indicate their province or territory)

For the full Health Canada advisory with photos, go to http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ahc-asc/media/advisories-avis/2010/2010_36-eng.php

It is important that we make parents and caregivers aware of the potential risks of they types of products so they can make informed decisions about their use.

Please contact our office if you have any questions about child safety issues.

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