

Baby carriers can range in price from \$19.95 up to \$100. However, there isn't always a direct correlation between quality and price. Most importantly, choose a carrier that is comfortable for you and your baby. The same can be said for walkers, jumpers, swings and infant seats. If budget is a concern, just be sure to check your local 2<sup>nd</sup> hand stores or garage sales.

## Types of Baby Carriers



tenderness in the parent.

Devices that allow the baby to be carried directly on the parent have been around since ancient times, when people found ways to strap their babies to their bodies so they could free their hands and arms for other tasks. The rhythmic movement of the parent can be relaxing to a colicky or distressed baby, and at the same time can evoke a feeling of

Wearing a frontpack or backpack requires gradual muscular adjustment on the part of the parent. The packs don't lessen the sense of weight; they simply place all the weight on the shoulders instead of the arms. Over time, this strengthens a parents leg, neck, and shoulder muscles.

Packs function best on hikes or long walks, and are terrific in places where strollers and carriages would be bulky and awkward. But they can be clumsy in confined situations such as stores or at home.

Once the child can sit up, a backpack is more comfortable for the parent than an infant carrier and also allows the child to have a view of more than just his parent's shirt. Backpacks are made to accommodate children weighing up to twenty-five pounds.

Getting the baby in the pack and getting it on will take some practice and, initially, someone else's help. Most parents balance the pack on a knee and place one arm into the appropriate strap before swinging the baby and pack around to put the other strap on. Others back into the pack, which they have placed in a chair with the baby already in it. All packs come with directions to help you adjust the pack to fit and to guide you in learning to shift the baby and the pack onto your back. Brisk walking with a baby in a frame carrier is far more

## BABY GIFTS & GIFT BASKETS

Each new baby is a unique gift that should be celebrated. Every child is precious and a product of the parents. That is why it is so important to choose a baby carrier (and all baby accessories) that work well for your needs.

[Baby Gifts and Gift Baskets](#) provides timely and practical information for new moms, as well as gift ideas for pregnancy, baby showers, and to celebrate birth:

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comfortable than passive activities that require standing still with the pack on.

There are two basic types of packs: those made solely of fabric, and those with tubular metal frames.

Soft carriers are especially useful to the newborn and the young baby, who will usually be soothed by the

involvement with your body's rhythmic movement. Some are designed to having the baby facing outward, away from your body, but most carriers snuggle your baby close to your chest, which is preferable for a very young baby. While you can use a fabric carrier with an older, heavier baby, it will feel like a heavier burden on your shoulders.

Tubular frame backpacks are especially made for babies over six months of age, who can sit up and like viewing the world over your shoulders. The frame helps to redistribute some your baby's weight off your shoulders and onto your back or hips.

When shopping for a soft carrier, look for the following:

The fabric should be heavyweight and completely washable. Corduroy, cotton, polyester, and denim are excellent.

Seams should be well finished, especially at stress points, such as where the straps are fastened to the pack

The carrier should be easy to put on, and it should fit. Some models will have shoulder straps that are spaced to far apart or are too long. Try it out in the store.

The strap fastening should be heavy-duty, preferably made of metal. It should be easy to adjust and should be able to hold the baby's weight securely.

The crotch width of the seat should no force the baby's legs into an uncomfortable splayed position, and the leg holes should be very soft and should not be higher than the seat, which could cut off circulation to the baby's legs.

The carrier should adjust to accommodate a growing baby, either by letting out seams, or adjusting straps. Read the directions and experiment before you buy it.

The shoulder pads should be thick and firm, for maximum comfort.

There should be a head support built in to prevent the baby's head from flopping.

Some carriers have discreet zippers for [nursing](#) so you don't have to take the baby out. Other carriers have instructions for how to use the carrier while breastfeeding.

A tubular frame pack should offer:

Very thick shoulder pads to keep the straps from gouging your shoulders.

A good fit - Try the pack on to see how its length and width fit your body size.. it should fit comfortably with the baby in it, you shouldn't feel the top rail digging into your backbone, or the frame interfering with your arm movements.

Correct strap positions - The straps should hit you directly on top of the muscles halfway between your neck and the end of your shoulders. If the straps are too widely set, it will cause undue postural stress. If they are too narrow, they can cause chafing and constriction around your neck.

Seat design and leg holes that is comfortable for your baby- the crotch of the seat should be narrow enough not to force the baby's legs too far apart. The leg holes of the seat should be flush with the seat, not higher than the seat, so circulation to the baby's legs won't be cut off. The rims of the leg holes should be soft, not scratchy.

There should be a sturdy, easy to operate, seat belt to prevent your baby from standing up in the carrier.

There should be padding on the front rail to protect your baby's gums and teeth when she mouths the front bar of the carrier frame as you walk.

The fabric should be sturdy, stretch resistant, and easy to clean. Make sure the seams, especially those around the top rail of the pack are reinforced around the high stress points. This will ensure your baby's safety.

A storage section at the base of the pack is a helpful feature.

A pack with a padded pelvic belt helps to redistribute the weight from your shoulders onto your less vulnerable pelvic area. This is a worthwhile feature if you're going to be hiking or camping.

Support stands are often pushed as a desirable feature. Some manufacturers claim the stand enables you to use the pack as an infant carrier. It doesn't. While the stands do help with putting the baby in the pack and mounting it on your back, they shouldn't be used as infant carriers because they're unstable and can topple over easily.

If you do buy a pack with a stand, examine the hinge mechanism to be sure it can't capture or crush fingers in its scissoring action.

## **Infant Seats**

Infant seats are made from rigid molded plastic shells on plastic stands or are cloth. Hammock-like seats sewn on to round frames. They hold the baby in an upright position, that is convenient for feeding or interaction, and they're easy to carry because of the rigid support they provide. Some infant seats are even designed to fit into the carts at the supermarket. They are good for [infants](#) up to five or six months of age.

As far as safety goes, there are about one thousand emergency room visits every year due to injuries, mostly to the head, when these seats slip off high surfaces, such as counters and tables. Occasionally, the seat support give way, or the baby's

movement causes the seat to fall. Many of these injuries could have been prevented if the baby had been properly fastened into the seat.

It's never a good idea to put an infant seat on a high surface; if you do, make sure the surface isn't slick, like the top of a washing machine. If you're going to turn your back, even for a second, put the infant seat down on the floor. Avoid buying infant seats that come with rockers or slender wire frames in the rear—they are potentially unstable. Also, never carry an infant seat by carry handles, which can fail or cause the seat to accidentally swing into a wall or a door. Infant seats, unless specified, cannot double as car restraints.

Look for an infant seat that has a non-skid bottom, so it won't slip off any surface. For greater stability, the base should be wider than the seat, and there should be some sort of supporting device in the back to prevent it from collapsing. There should be an adequate crotch and body belt with latches that won't slip. A seat that has several adjustable positions will be most useful. And look for one that's easy to clean, made of vinyl or other water resistant material, so you can easily remove spills and crumbs.

### Fluffles Plush Lamb



Sure to be your child's favorite stuffed animal, this 14" tall cream-colored Our "Fluffles" lamb is super soft and cuddly. He has child friendly embroidered facial features and is Machine Washable. This gift comes wrapped in cellophane and tied with a bow.

**Price: \$ 18.00**

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### Jumpers and Swings

A jumper is a fabric or plastic seat that is suspended from a metal clamp on a door jamb via a combination of chains, springs or rubber and fabric strips. The baby bounces it from it, pushing off from the floor. Some babies don't like them, others do, and they will enjoy them until they can walk.

The problem with jumpers is that the clamp can release or the straps can fray or break, causing the baby to plunge to the floor, or strike the door frame. Some of the seats put too much pressure on the baby's inner thigh, causing red marks or circulation problems. They're hard to set up, too, and prolonged use has produced vertigo, similar to seasickness in babies. There's also a danger of whiplash. We don't recommend them.

Swings are a useful luxury item, especially for a colicky or fussy baby. They can be very soothing. There is usually a small seat, sometimes a mesh-sided bed, suspended from a four legged metal stand. There is usually a wind up handle or a large plastic knob that tightens

an interior spring mechanism that makes it swing. Some are battery operated. The rhythmic motion soothes the baby- and the parents. One of the biggest drawbacks to swings is that they don't get used for very long, and they take up lots of room, which can be difficult in an apartment.

Look for a swing that has the longest possible running time for each winding, it can be frustrating to get your baby lulled to sleep and have the swing stop, especially many of the winding devices will startle the baby-so also look for one with a quiet wind-up mechanism. There should be padding on the front bar of the seat and leg holes no higher than the seat level, with smooth edging. Make sure the frame is wide and stable, preferably with locking side bars. Don't bother with an awning, you'll seldom use the swing outside, so the awning serves no purpose.

## **Walkers**

Walkers don't help babies walk any sooner. In fact, the leg actions required for a baby to use a [walker](#) have nothing to do with walking. Keeping a baby in a walker may actually impede the natural transition a baby will make from crawling to walking. Besides that, walkers can be downright dangerous. Each year there are thousands of walker related emergency room visits, many a result of walkers flipping over or falling down stairs. In the past, many injuries resulted from fingers getting caught in x-frames that collapsed. New regulations in 1972, required that all parts that could crush, lacerate, or sever fingers be covered, and that walkers be protected against accidental collapse.

The major problem with walkers is that the baby's mobility is increased and parents can't keep up with him. The baby can very quickly tip the walker over in the process of moving it over rugs, cords, or other obstacles. If you turn your back to answer the door, your baby could be heading for the stairs.

Walkers do give eight to ten month olds an early taste of mobility, but the high risk of injury and the short period of time that they're even appropriate make walkers a poor investment.

## **Gates**

For the most part, gates aren't safe, especially the kind with rubber gaskets that can fall down the stairs along with the baby, causing more injuries than if the baby fell alone. Gates with mesh can be climbed if the mesh isn't tight enough. Accordion style gates present a tremendous pinching hazard to little fingers, and they're also quite climbable.

If you must gate off an area, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission recommends gates that are made of climb-resistant mesh in a small diamond pattern and that have a straight top edge, these gates should be attached firmly to the wall with screws, not rubber gaskets. If you do use an accordion gate, use one that doesn't have to be stretched much; select the longest gate that will fit the doorway in a closed position [so the openings can't be climbed in] and install it with screws. A homemade gate of plywood with no crossbars will also work, as will a locking screen or wood door. All gates should be installed with minimal space between gate and floor so the baby can't get trapped trying to crawl under it.

If you are going to use a pressure gate, which we don't recommend, make sure the pressure bar side of the gate is away from the child, who could use it to climb on.

The best alternatives to gates are to teach your baby to manage stairs as soon as she can crawl and have her practice with supervision. Install railings on the stairway at a height accessible to children who are eighteen months to five years old.

