

INTRODUCTION

Infants like me are held and carried like precious bundles by our parents, grandparents, and people who come to see us. We are cradled in their arms, great care is taken to support the head. We learn to mold our body with that of the person carrying us. Believe me when I tell you that we can make out the people who are comfortable with carrying us, the novices and even the person trying to be friendly but is actually worried about us doing su su on them.

As we grow older we are able to raise our head from the shoulder or the person carrying us and look around. At first it is for a few seconds, as we tire easily at this stage and the head is very wobbly too. It is still very important to support the head and the neck at this time. It seems easier to support the neck by the crook of your arm instead of supporting by the palm of your hand. The safe ways are either cradling me in your arms while I lie comfortably on my back looking up to you. You could also put me with my tummy against your shoulder, one arm supporting my neck and the other arm supporting my knees. When you are sitting on the floor or the bed with legs bent you could place me in front of you so that you and I could discuss the politics of the world. I could also lie on your chest while you are leaning back and you could sing to me. Another great way of carrying me is by giving my back full support against your chest so that I can look in front and keep my head in mid line. You need to put your left arm across my chest and right arm under my knees to support me. This is if you are right handed like I am.

As we grow older and our head is steady (which is approximately 3 months onwards), people tend to swoop us from the bed or the floor by reaching for our shoulders or picking us from the waist. Many of us enjoy this casual way of being carried. By the time we are five to six months old, mothers often carry us by placing one of our legs in front of her stomach and the other behind her. If I am placed on the right side then support with the right arm is given and the other arm is left free for some other work.

For some of us many of these positions or changes in position do not come easily. There could be many reasons for this:

- The muscle tone of my body could be very loose or low;
- The muscle tone of my body could be very tight;
- My body may have involuntary and uncontrolled movement;
- I may not be able plan my motor movements too well; or
- Too many sudden changes in posture disorient me.

IF I HAVE LOW TONE

Provide pressure and stability while positioning and handling me.

HOW SHOULD I BE LIFTED WHILE I LIE ON THE BED?

Turn me to my side, cuddle or gather me in your arms in a way that brings my legs and arms close together, and my back rounded. I would need support of both your arms. Keeping my body rounded or flexed helps to develop my muscle tone.

Please do NOT lift me by putting your arms under my shoulder. My head will fall back or in front, my arms would hang loose on the sides and my legs too will have no support.

HOW SHOULD I BE CARRIED?

Hold me securely by supporting my back with your body. Bend my hips and knees by giving one arm support under my knee. Your other hand has to go across my chest.

Do NOT carry me across your hips. Don't let my legs hang loose.

HOW SHOULD I BE SUPPORTED WHILE I SLEEP AT NIGHT?

Due to my loose muscle tone both my legs may be in a frog like position i.e. the knees will be bent outwards. It would help if you make me sleep on my sides alternately with support from behind. The knees could be bent forward. At times if I do happen to lie on my back then put both my legs in one of my pajamas or make a long skirt with stretch material. Some mothers have wrapped duppata round the legs to keep them together.

IF I HAVE HIGH TONE

Due to the tightness, my body will be stiff leading to incorrect patterns and positions which need to be corrected as early as possible. My body will mostly be extended, head going backwards, back arched, hands straight with palms at times facing outward. My legs and feet would be straight or if there is extreme stiffness one leg may cross over the other from the hip.

HOW SHOULD I BE LIFTED WHILE I LIE ON THE BED?

Gently rock me and bring me to a bent position. Support me from the shoulders and keep my knees apart with your hands

Turn me to side lying and bend my body forward bringing the knees to the chest. Then pick me up by giving your arm support beneath my chest, keeping knees and hips bent

If my legs cross then use the first technique to lift me up. ***Do not try not to lift me while i lie on my back by putting your arms under my arm pit. This makes me stiffer.***

Try not to bend my head forward by pressing against the back of my head. This is very uncomfortable and will cause me to push back more strongly with my legs becoming stiffer.

HOW SHOULD I BE CARRIED?

Put me across your hip so that my legs are separated. Support and bend my body by molding me with your body. Support my chest with one of your arms and the other arm place under my bent knee. Do NOT make me stand on the floor or table and try and make me walk. Hold me to your shoulder with my legs hanging stiffly in the air.

HOW SHOULD I BE SUPPORTED WHILE I SLEEP AT NIGHT?

Make me lie on the bed with a pillow under my head and my shoulders so that both head and shoulders come forward. Put another pillow under my knees so that they are slightly bent and my foot is resting on the bed. Thus my straight body has three breaks. If I am lying sideways then put folded towel, small bolster between by legs to prevent them from crossing over.