



metro@thestar.com.my

# Weighing benefits of babywearing

The sling turns out to be a comfortable way to accomplish a new year resolution

I ALWAYS make a few resolutions before a new year begins and focus on fulfilling them before their timelines. Top on my list is to get back into shape through proper exercise and diet.

While this is a common goal among many young women, for me it is out of necessity because after giving birth to baby Cat seven months ago, I had to increase my food intake to produce sufficient milk for breastfeeding.

It is a delicate situation – I want to shed at least 6kg in a relatively short period of three months and yet I cannot cut my food intake drastically or adopt a strenuous workout programme as it would reduce or, worse, halt my milk production.

The only low-impact exercise I can think of is carrying baby Cat as much as possible throughout the day and during evening walks in our neighbourhood.

This is an especially good time since we can enjoy fresh air, unlike the hazy conditions in previous months that prevented us from indulging in outdoor activities.

Pushing her around in a stroller is easier but it is not an effective workout for me compared to carrying her. Carrying a big baby for an hour is pretty difficult although it is an effective fat-burning regime.

I have tried carrying her during evening walks and it proved difficult for both of us. Her weight strains my arms and aggravates the tendonitis in my wrists.

About 15 minutes into our walk on our first attempt, the shooting pain in my arms was unbearable and I could not carry her home. I had to phone my maid to bring the stroller.

Determined to continue with the exercise, I asked around for advice. A few mothers suggested babywearing.

My friend, Charmaine Chek, a mother of two young children, explained that it meant carrying the baby in a sling or any form of carrier. She advocated using a sling over the conventional crotch carrier to avoid injuring the baby's hip that could result in hip dysplasia.

Later, I visited unisonca.com, a

site dedicated to teaching parents how to carry their babies with cloths used as slings in front, at the side or on their backs as they go on with their daily chores.

The Japanese have turned babywearing into an art form and developed various slings to carry babies in different positions.

Sukkiri and Pittari are the traditional methods of carrying newborns and toddlers up to three years old while Supporti is the modern method for carrying babies who are able to sit upright.

Convinced of the benefits of babywearing, I got hold of the three slings in trendy colours and asked Charmaine to teach me to use them, starting with the sukkiri, which is a traditional mesh ring sling.

The sling wraps baby Cat snugly to my body and she feels secure. Even I feel safer because it negates the lingering fear that my baby may accidentally drop or be easily snatched from my arms.

What's more, I can discreetly breastfeed her while I walk around.

The sling supports my baby's weight with the strong deltoid muscle in my shoulder.

Surprisingly, my arms are not strained and I can carry the weight of my baby for longer periods as the



Young mothers holding their babies in slings during a samba class at a studio in Tokyo. The Japanese have turned babywearing into an art form. — AFPpic

soft mesh material is also gentle on her skin.

With her attached to my body, we interact and bond better. I say out the names of the things we see along the way and she hears me clearly and reads my lips.

Other mothers vouch that babywearing helps their babies speak earlier as they are in close proximity to hear and observe their mothers.

On cool evenings, especially after it rains, I use the Pittari wrap with a waist belt because it has more cloth and keeps Cat warm. Better still, it helps me sweat.

My former classmate, Nai One, who lives in London, travelled with her husband around Europe with their baby, Kaia, then only two months old, wrapped snugly in a Pittari wrap.

As baby Cat can sit upright now, I used the sling on our recent family holiday to the beach.

Made of mesh material, it provides good air flow and is cooler for

both of us. With her wrapped around me, I dipped her in the sea.

Baby Cat thoroughly enjoys her evening walks. She is so comfortable in these slings that she often falls asleep after a few rounds. More importantly, I don't feel any strain or pain and can walk faster.

Good news is that I have lost 1kg since the Christmas and New Year binge. I am definitely on track to accomplish an important resolution for the year just by carrying my precious 9kg bundle of joy for evening walks, bonding with her and enjoying the fresh air.

What a good start to the year. May you have a blessed year, too!

**Chermaine Poo is a chartered accountant turned actress, TV host, emcee and columnist. Follow her on [www.chermainepoo.com](http://www.chermainepoo.com), [Facebook.com/ChermainePoo](https://www.facebook.com/ChermainePoo), and [Instagram.com/ChermainePoo](https://www.instagram.com/ChermainePoo) or drop her an email at [info@chermainepoo.com](mailto:info@chermainepoo.com)**