



Taking the pain out of parenting

Most people associate pain with labour and delivery when they think about parenting. However, parenting can lead to pain in the back, shoulders and wrists if you are not used to lifting and holding 10-20 lb babies all day. It is important to use good ergonomics for the job of parenting to maintain a healthy body. Minimizing strain and pain gives you more time to enjoy your little one!

General rules:

- 1) To hold or lift a child, keep her/him as close to your body as possible. Keep your back straight and use your leg muscles to lift.
- 2) Switch sides frequently. Most people tend to do most activities with their dominant hand and hold or carry their child with their non-dominant hand or side. This can strain the side that carries the child. Try switching sides halfway through your activity or the next time you undertake the activity.
- 3) Support yourself whenever you are holding your child. For example, sit down, place a pillow behind your back, under your arm or leg.

Use your whole hand to support the weight of your child rather than spreading your fingers apart. Spreading your fingers can strain individual fingers.

Tips for common parenting activities:

1. To lift from a crib or the floor, move your child close to your body and bend your knees slightly before lifting. Alternatively, kneel down to the floor on one knee and lift your child using strength from your legs.
2. Choose a change table or a high chair that is as close to your elbow height as possible.
3. Bathe your child in the kitchen sink or place the baby bath on the counter top. If you must use the bath tub, kneel on a soft object for protection. To lift your child out of the tub, lean against the side of the tub, lift and hold your child in close to your body and then pivot away from the tub by using your knees to turn. Avoid twisting your upper body and use your legs to stand up.
4. Choose a stroller with handles that are at elbow height or height adjustable.
5. Infant “bucket seats” should only be carried for short distances. Avoid using the handle. Carry the seat with both hands: place one hand at the head and one at the feet and hold the seat against your body. To place the “bucket seat” or your child into his/her seat, place one foot in the car so that your weight can be transferred from outside to inside, using your leg for support.