



New Mother Body Mechanics Pointers

an online resource
created to accompany

Pre- and Perinatal Massage Therapy:

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and Postpartum Practice*
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New Mother Body Mechanics Pointers

- Take the time to take good care of yourself when lifting, carrying, holding, diapering, and feeding. It only costs a few extra seconds to move with awareness and integrity.
- To get into the car, sit beside the car seat, and then lift the baby to your lap to carry out of the car in front of you.
- Bulky car seats create less strain carried in front of your body, rather than dangling by the handle at your side. Another alternative: balance the car seat with your purse and diaper bag on the other side.
- All baby care furniture needs to be high and close enough to you so that you are not leaning forward from the waist for extended periods or to lift your baby. Choose changing tables and cribs that have the baby at your waist height. Often the kitchen sink is at a more ideal height for baths than leaning over the bathroom tub.
- Choose a baby stroller with an adjustable height handle or at least of sufficient height that you do not have to hunch to push it.
- Avoid lifting your baby and twisting at the same time whenever possible. Use your legs rather than your back, keeping the baby



as close to your torso as possible as you raise or lower her. Also remember to exhale during the effort of lifting rather than holding your breath. Be especially careful to avoid strain when lifting from an infant swing, walker, portable cribs, strollers, and in taking items from your car's trunk.

- Carry your baby in a variety of ways: football carry, hip carry, front carry, and shoulder carry. Remember to keep the baby's weight as close to your center of gravity as possible and to keep your spine in alignment.
- Use chairs that support your back in its natural curves, or adapt with cushions or pillows. Be sure that your feet rest on the floor and your knees and hips are level. Armrests should support your forearms and not raise or allow your shoulders to droop.
- When standing allow your spine to curve naturally and align so that your ears, shoulders, hips, backs of knees and ankles are in line with each other.
- Avoid stomach sleeping. Use a supported sidelying position aligning your spine with proper head pillow height and a pillow between your knees to level off your hip and knee. When on your back, prop your knees over a pillow, and try a rolled towel under your neck and lumbar region if necessary to get adequate support.
- Be sure to roll to your side and push up with your arms to get up from the bed or floor rather than jack-knifing to a seated position.



- Include daily stretching especially for your shoulders, arms, and neck. Consult books or attend a class to learn how safely and effectively. (See some of the resources below.)
- Learn and perform daily strengthening exercises especially for the abdominal and pelvic floor muscles. You can use your baby as a “graduated weight program” to tone arms and legs too. (See some of the resources below.)
- Take care to nurse or feed your baby with good support and alignment for you. Bring the baby to the breast with armrests, your crossed leg and/or pillows so that you are not leaning over. This will also allow you to relax your shoulders more if her weight is on the supports rather than straining your arms.
- If feeding in bed, align and support your head and spine as well as the baby. Either lie down completely or sit up completely, avoiding a slouched, half-sitting posture against the wall or headboard.
- To minimize “new mother’s neck” discomforts, periodically look around, up and behind you while nursing, pausing to stretch in directions that feel good. Be sure to alternate sides, even if you are bottle feeding. This helps you and encourages balanced eye development for your little one.
- Many childcare tasks require bending forward, and encourage a collapsed chest, rounded thoracic spine, and flexed arms and



wrists. Spend time each day opening out in these areas, stretching and resting to reduce chronic anterior shortening.

- Protect your wrists and hands by taking care to not overflex them carrying your baby. Stretch, massage and rest them each day.
- Enjoy your baby and your new life as a mother!

Resources and References

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