

Business of Parenting:

Created by parents, for parents

GETTING BABY OFF YOUR BACK

By Danielle Sullivan



Stein, on left, and Gilbert

When you're a new mom, getting ready for a relaxing stroll can turn into the equivalent of packing for an overseas trip. You can't leave without the diaper bag, well stocked with diapers, bibs, burp cloths, pacifiers, tissues, your keys, and other endless necessities. And if you're in the mood for a walk unencumbered by wheeling a stroller around, the options for carrying your growing baby are somewhat limited, as is the range of motion that typical baby carriers allow.

This became a problem for **Robin Stein** in 2003, after she had given birth to her now four-year-old son, Joseph. "At just shy of 6 months, he was 21 pounds. My back hurt and my fussy baby wanted to be held. I tried every baby sling and baby carrier available, but nothing existed that had back support," she says.

Having a background in product design, merchandising and sourcing, Stein knew exactly what she needed, and so began designing her own carrier. Once a prototype was finished, she used it to carry her son all over

the Upper West Side. After being asked by several moms where they could get one themselves, Stein began sending out samples of her prototype to factories that could mass produce them.

Coincidentally, Tribeca mom **Jennifer Gilbert**, founder and president of Save the Date, an event planning company, was in her own struggle with a baby carrier when she received Robin's sample. "My baby girl was about 8 months old, way too big and heavy for the front carrier I owned. All the other carriers I bought never quite worked," says Gilbert. Gilbert's daughter, Blaise, is now 3 and has twin brothers, Saxton and Grey, who are just eight weeks old. Of Stein's carrier, Gilbert says, "I fell in love with it — it has revolutionized my life. To be comfortable, look great, and actually be able to see my daughter, talk on my phone and have my other hand free was a new experience."

Gilbert quickly signed on to help launch the product, and soon the PortaMEe carrier was born. Geared

continued on next page

PortaMEe...

continued from previous page

for babies who are at least 6 weeks old and eight pounds, the carrier has strategically placed pockets so moms, dads and caregivers can ditch the diaper bag and carry baby hands-free. The ergonomic design supports the back and enables eye contact with the child. Stein points out that the PortaMEe is worn on the side, relying on the body's natural strength in the hips and legs. "Women have been carrying babies on their hips for thousands of years," she says. "Front-style soft carriers put extra strain on your center and lower back, and those backpack-style carriers, well, you can't even see your child."

Accentuated with a leather trim, the carrier includes a fanny pack diaper bag, removable insulated bottle holder, and a built-in compartment for a cell phone, Blackberry, wallet, and keys. The baby carrier will also appeal to the dad-gear types who want something gender neutral but cool.

PortaMEe is available at Giggle and Bergdorf Goodman, as well as www.portamee.com.

