

■ SHAWARMA FOR THE SOUL

Mum knows best

When Anja Vinter's third child Anna was born, Vinter had no idea what was in store for her. Her child suffered from gastroesophageal reflux (symptoms include regurgitation and vomiting. It sometimes occurs when babies cough, cry or strain). In Anna's case, the reflux was so bad, that Vinter couldn't leave her lying down for even a short while.

"I had a relatively easy time with my first and second born, so I was not prepared for the sleepless nights induced by Anna's reflux problem," says Vinter. "I had to keep her constantly upright so that she would stop crying."

The result: Vinter ended up carrying her for most of the day. Within a few days, Vinter began experiencing chronic back problems



SUPPLIED PHOTOS

and aching shoulders as a result of carrying her baby the entire day. While physiotherapy did help, it only offered short-term relief to Vinter.

"Anna [had to be carried constantly] and I simply had to find a solution," says Vinter. "I started looking for slings to help me carry her and ease

my sore shoulders and arms. But I really struggled to find one. So I decided to make one for myself."

Vinter employed her creative side and applied her sewing skills to make her first sling.

"It turned out to be a very convenient way to carry Anna. So



Mother of three Anja Vinter started the Anna Pi range (left) for mothers and babies after her daughter, Anna (in sling), suffered from chronic reflux

only durable but also light, so that the child can breathe easily," she says.

There is also a psychological aspect to using a sling, reveals Vinter. "Wearing a sling has definitely created a strong bond between my baby and I. Anna was close to me constantly. Babies need to feel the security of being close to their parents – to feel their warmth and their mother's heartbeat.

"As they grow, the sling aligns with their spine and they can start looking out and exploring their surroundings from the safety of the sling bag. I feel that Anna benefited a lot from this constant closeness and I think this in part contributed to eliminating her reflux symptoms. It also allowed me to get on with my chores."

Vinter has also created feeding pillows and covers, designed with support, flexibility and functionality in mind.

"The patterns I use on my designs are generally neutral so dads too can use them to carry the baby. Having said that, I've yet to get my husband wear one of my slings!"

– Preethi Janice D'Sa is a Dubai-based freelancer

TEST YOUR NUTRITION IQ

Don't count your chickens...

Often, when the conversation turns to dietary fat, eggs get a bad rap. Would you be better off eating just the whites? Here's a quiz to find out how much you know about fat and nutrition content of eggs. Answer the following questions true or false.

1. Egg whites have more calories than yolks.
2. Most of the protein in eggs is in the yolk.
3. For less fat, use two egg yolks instead of one whole egg.
4. Egg white is high in lutein, which helps prevent macular degeneration.
5. Yolks have more sodium than egg whites.
6. Egg yolks contain vitamin D, which helps maintain strong bones.
7. Egg whites contain saturated fat.
8. Egg whites contain cholesterol.

– McClatchy-Tribune Information Services



ANSWERS: (1) False; (2) False; (3) False; (4) True; (5) False; (6) False; (7) False; (8) False

Sources: Prevention magazine, August 2007

■ RESEARCH



Blue light, sleep tight

Riding in school buses in the early morning, then sitting in poorly lit classrooms are the main reasons students have trouble getting to sleep at night, according to new research. Teenagers, like everyone else, need bright lights in the morning, particularly in the blue wavelengths, to synchronise their inner, circadian rhythms with nature's cycles of day and night.

If they are deprived of blue light during the morning, they go to sleep an average of six minutes later each night, until their bodies are completely out of sync with the school day, researchers from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute reported recently. The finding was made by fitting a group of students with goggles that blocked blue light and discovering that their circadian rhythms were significantly affected.

Parents and teachers have been complaining in recent years that teens stay up too late at night, then fall asleep in class the next morning and do poorly in school. The new findings provide a possible explanation for the problem.

At the root of the research is the circadian rhythm, the body's natural sleep and waking cycle. Even though the Earth makes a full rotation in 24 hours, the body's circadian cycle is about 24 hours and six minutes long. The cycle is mediated by a chemical called melatonin. The body starts to produce it about two hours before it is time to fall asleep and, in the absence of light, melatonin is released about six minutes later each day.

That is why people in dark rooms, caves or other locations with no external time cues will fall asleep about six minutes later each day, so that their sleep-wake cycles slowly drift in and out of alignment with the outside world.

– Los Angeles Times

■ EDUCATION



Mind your (body) language, please

British school teachers have been told to copy the gestures of their pupils in an effort to reduce bad behaviour in class by building a rapport. Thousands of staff are having lessons in how to read children's body language and modify their own – learning to observe posture, gestures, mannerisms, facial expressions, speech and tone, in order to establish pupils' emotional state and build trust.

Staff are encouraged to copy a child's gestures, a technique called "matching or mirroring", to give them a subconscious message that the teacher is sympathetic towards them. If a child is talking with their left hand touching their chin, for example, the teacher should stand and

hold their own left hand to their chin. If the pupil tilts their head to the side, the teacher should mirror them.

The teacher should cross their legs if a student does and, while talking, make the same hand gestures as the pupil used when they spoke. "Closed" signals, such as folded arms or standing behind a desk, are to be avoided. The training is part of set of exercises called neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) which is designed to improve communication and patterns of behaviour. Critics said, however, that NLP was a "bizarre mixture of pseudo-science and New Age thinking" – and yet another educational fad that diverts attention away from good teaching.

What NLP is saying is that teachers have to learn to take their cue from children, a complete reversal of the relationship where pupils take their cue from the teacher.

– The Telegraph Group London