

# She's Got **Your Back**

MOTHER'S BABY CARRIER HELPS PREVENT STRAIN WHILE SUPPORTING YOUR LITTLE ONE **BY EDITH G. TOLCHIN**

**H**ERE'S A **BABY CARRIER** with an added advantage. If you have back problems—or want to avoid them while “wearing” your little one—Mamapod features a pole attached to the bottom of the carrier, below baby’s tush, helping to support baby and prevent back strain for the adult.

I spoke with Cindy Wang, a mother and the product’s inventor.

**Edith G. Tolchin (EGT):** How did Mamapod come about?

**Cindy Wang (CW):** When my daughter was 18 months old, my husband and I took her on her first trip to Disneyland. I’m a petite mom, so by the end of a full day carrying her around in a soft carrier, I was totally exhausted, stressed out—and my back was killing me.

When we reached the final stop, I searched in vain for something safe to prop her and the carrier up on to relieve the pressure on my body. I thought to myself, “Even a stick would work.”

Necessity was the mother of invention, encouraging me to design a carrier solution that empowers all parents and caregivers with the means to travel with babies and toddlers with less hassle and more joy.

Using my 20 years of experience as an engineer and business development manager in the technology industry, I developed Mamapod, the first ergonomic baby carrier that keeps children close and comfortable while preserving comfort for parents.

Within Mamapod’s first year on the market, we are so pleased to have received a “Seal of Approval” from the National Parenting Center and a “Best Baby Product” award from the National Parenting Product Awards.

**EGT:** What are Mamapod’s specific advantages over standard baby carriers?

**CW:** New parents deal with so much physical stress, and Mamapod helps alleviate one of the major sources of that stress—the many hours per day spent carrying a baby who is growing bigger every day. The carrier redefines baby wear by offering

ergonomic structural support for both baby and parents, addressing common issues like back and shoulder support, protection for the child, comfort and breathability.

Mamapod uniquely features:

- **A detachable support pole** that offloads all carrying load to the ground when you stand and rest. The support pole is light (less than 0.9 lbs.) and installs in seconds to the seat via magnet, while foldable to easily store in the seat pocket. It can be adjusted to fit parents between 4’9” and 6’1.”
- **Shoulder and waist straps** that ensure proper load distribution and extra lumbar support.
- **Adjustable leg openings** that offer comfort and safety for your baby when facing either inward or outward.
- **A foldable seat** that supports baby with comfort in addition to a “seat-only” mode, which is convenient for on-the-go activities with toddlers. The parent can push the buttons on either side of the seat to fold it like a fanny pack when not in use.
- **A breathable inner mesh layer** for maximum comfort, especially on hot days. The mesh baby hood can be buttoned on to keep your child cool and comfortable, whether you’re on the go or if baby is taking a nap.
- **Adjustability** as your child grows from 4 to 36 months, 12 lbs. to 44 lbs. Baby can snuggle in close, facing you or facing out.

**EGT:** How involved was your prototyping process?

**CW:** I kludged many mockups at home to use by myself when my daughter was little. I used all kinds of support sticks from a walking cane to a cleaning pole, tried puffy seats from stuffed animals, baking gloves to a small pillow.

After the mockup proved functional, I shared with my friends who became part of the Mamapod creative team. We worked with our design team to try out different structures of support frame, monopod, tripod, wheels, no wheels. We created different models that function very well but at the end decided

**By the end of a full day of carrying around her 18-month-old daughter in a soft carrier at Disneyland, Cindy Wang “was totally exhausted, stressed out—and my back was killing me.”**



Caption to go here.

on the current Mamapod configuration—because we wished the first Mamapod to be functional yet user friendly, a tool for all the parents, not too big, not too heavy, not too complex, easy to use, and not too costly.

It has been a much longer journey than we expected. It took many iterations, taking in recommendations from industry experts in the field, feedback from Mamapod’s early fans, redesign with experienced professionals. After three to four major revisions, the Mamapod of today’s configuration was born. We are still making small improvements to make it even better.

**EGT: Was it difficult to obtain a patent for Mamapod?**

**CW:** We are still going through the process to patent all the breakthroughs. We got some of our invention patented. A lot more are still in the pipeline. The challenge is to distinguish our invention in the scope of application (baby carrying).

**EGT: Are you manufacturing in the United States, or overseas?**

**CW:** We manufacture in China. It is very difficult to find the right partner in the United States. The challenge is to go through all the details of our unique design to make sure it is manufacturable, work with the factory to get all the procedure and QC protocols in place, and to manage the process. On top of ensuring the International Organization for Standardization quality standard implemented at our factory, we quality-check each unit to make sure it passes our quality standard.

**EGT: How has the Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act affected the manufacture of Mamapod, as well as the certifications needed in order to sell a baby product in general?**

**CW:** Mamapod is compliant to safety standard ASTM F2236, the U.S. safety requirement for consumer safety. We work with Consumer Product Safety Commission-approved labs to obtain this certification.

It is crucial to work with authorized testing labs, because their expertise helped tremendously and guided us to ensure our design is safe and compliant.

When we get to the zone of confirming the Mamapod’s unique inventions, such as the innovative leg opening (to help baby sit comfortably yet safely in all positions) and support pole (to help parents carry their baby while alleviating neck, back and shoulder stress), a high-quality lab goes beyond reading and following standards. Their staff interprets the standard and applies the criteria to our specific design to assure safety.

**EGT: How many styles and colors are featured?**

**CW:** The Mamapod Baby Carrier has two color variations: natural gray and metallic blue. Customers can also choose between a carrier with or without the support pole.

**EGT: What obstacles have you encountered in development?**

**CW:** Although there have been many challenges developing the product, currently our biggest challenge is to let the consumer know about Mamapod.

Baby carrying is a vast market, with no shortage of competition. We are still learning the effective way to educate the market. Shortly building up brand awareness is our major task now.

We are learning the new-age marketing, impact of social media, the new landscape and power of combined online and retail sales channels. We find

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the early Mamapod fans are parents with bigger, heavier babies; parents who enjoy outdoor activities, hiking, museums, aquariums, concerts; parents who travel with their little ones. A handy tool like Mamapod truly empowers parents to enjoy the precious time with their baby, to explore, discover and see the world together.

**EGT: What advice do you have for inventors looking to develop a baby product?**

**CW:** It is not an easy process! Transforming an idea to a design to a product and then through the market to a consumer requires investment in talents, experience, market input, patience to work through the many iterations and adequate funding.

When the process gets tough, always remember why you began and stick to that. Inject with tenacity to complete and run through the finish line. We are all still learning, and it's important to always look for inspiration from the many fellow and pioneering inventors ahead of us.

I would also love to share my advice specifically for mom inventors, as I am one myself. It is easier said

than done, but balance is the golden rule to handle the workload of business and family. It is perfectly fine to take a break, either at work or at home for whatever reason.

We often hold ourselves to high expectations, and when we can't fulfil a commitment, we feel guilty. Yet, the world keeps spinning. If we have good resources behind us, our business and family can function perfectly!

Above all else, be proud of your choices, be assertive of your needs, be thankful to your supports, be at ease with yourself, try your best and enjoy the journey. 🐼

*Details: mamapod.com*

Books by **Edie Tolchin** (egt@edietolchin.com) include "Fanny on Fire" (fannyonfire.com) and "Secrets of Successful Inventing." She has written for *Inventors Digest* since 2000. Edie has owned EGT Global Trading since 1997, assisting inventors with product safety issues and China manufacturing.



## 2 Critical Steps to getting your NEW PRODUCT "out there"

### 1 GET IT MADE

Contact Edie Tolchin – "The Sourcing Lady" (SM) for sourcing, China manufacturing, product safety issues, packaging assistance, quality control, production testing, final shipment inspections, freight arrangements, import services and delivery to your door!

### 2 GET A WEBSITE!

Contact Ken Robinson – While your order is being manufactured, you need to start working on your WEB PRESENCE! Get people talking about your product on Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Google+), get good search engine placement (SEO)!

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