

Teething Mitten Takes Hold

AGITATED 3-MONTH-OLD SPARKED MOTHER'S INVENTION

BY EDITH G. TOLCHIN



Melissa Seifert-Hyslop sought to invent a teething mitten that would protect a baby's hands while providing pain relief, interest and easy access.

AMONG MY WISHES is to one day become a grandma. I hope my two children are reading this!

Meanwhile, I continue to specialize in manufacturing baby products in China. My ears and eyes are tuned in to new inventions, and I'm always interested in the various ways inventors bring these items to market.

As I have often mentioned, I am especially interested in product safety. Based on Melissa Seifert-Hyslop's efforts with her company Malarkey Kids, I'm confident her Munch Mitt® and other products will be A-OK for your little ones—and, I hope, for my grand-little ones someday!

Edith G. Tolchin (EGT): How did your background lead to the Munch Mitt?

Melissa Seifert-Hyslop (MSH): After graduating from radio broadcasting, I worked in events and promotions at a radio station. Despite liking my job, I had a desire to be an entrepreneur in events and promotions.

As such, I co-founded the first speed dating service in Canada. After 10 years of financial success and meeting my husband, I wanted to try something new and closer to my heart—creating much-needed products for my babies.

EGT: How did the Munch Mitt come about?

MSH: I invented the original silicone teething mitten when my first-born son went from being a giggly, laid-back baby boy to a monster baby! Suddenly my 3-month-old was cranky, up all night and drooling like crazy. I noticed he had started to put his hands in his mouth all the time, too.

Turns out that the teething process had begun! Due to his age, my son was unable to hold a typical teether

to provide himself with relief. He then turned to his hands, or my hands (when available). Sometimes I would have to sit and hold teethers to his mouth for hours!

In addition to this, my son had sensitive skin. All that saliva on his hands caused them to get hard and dry. His skin would crack and sometimes even bleed (especially after his front teeth cut), and he would still chew his hands.

I needed something that would protect his hands, give him pain relief and keep him interested. He also needed to be able to access it himself to self-soothe.

EGT: What are the unique functions of Munch Mitt?

MSH: The Munch Mitt is a fun, functional and convenient teething solution that protects baby's hands from chewing, prevents the constant dropping of teething toys, and aids young infants in accessing pain relief easily. This sensory teething mitt consists of a food-grade silicone teether, a stimulating pattern, and makes crinkly sounds.

Turn it over, and the Munch Mitt can be worn on whichever hand is preferred by baby. Further, toss it in the washing machine for easy cleaning for Mom and Dad.

EGT: What was your patent experience?

MSH: Patenting is a much more tricky process than I had initially thought or had known going into this. The key is finding a good lawyer. I had to learn about the difference between a utility and a design patent—as well as the timelines and requirements in order to get them.

I would say I was advised poorly by my first lawyer and didn't discover this until later in the year after speaking with other entrepreneurs. I then had to hire a second lawyer to apply and control my patents. I would say that patenting is a very important part of launching any product to market, especially in this time where online shopping makes it much easier for counterfeits and knock-offs to enter the market.

EGT: Have you had obstacles in any phase of product development?

MSH: I would say the process of product development took much longer than I had thought. All in all, it was close to three years before I had a product ready to go to market. I would say the sourcing of materials, and various prototyping as well as manufacturer sourcing, was the hardest part.

EGT: Had you invented anything before this?

MSH: No; however, the Munch Mitt has numerous sister products. The Buddy Bib 3-in-1 Bib Teether & Toy! It provides a unique combination of a detachable and lovable plush sensory toy that holds the teether (which can be replaced with baby's favorite pacifier) and a soft, absorbent reversible bib. The plush sensory toy can be affixed anywhere, making baby's teether, or pacifier, accessible to baby while preventing it from being dropped or lost.

Much like the Munch Mitt, bold patterns, bright colors and crinkle sounds provide added sensory stimulation while the soft, absorbent bib keeps baby's skin and clothes dry. When the Buddy Bib

gets drool-filled or dirty, simply throw it in the washing machine for easy cleaning.

The Chew Cube Easy-Grip Teether Rattle is the new modern-day rattle. With its soft corners, geometrical design and beautiful colors, the rattle has gone from cheesy to classy.

Offering four-way sensory stimulation, the Chew Cube features flexible, textured edges that soothe tender gums; a black-and-white pattern and mirrors that provide visual stimulation; a rattle that offers sounds to stimulate baby's hearing, and a modern geometrical design that helps build baby's gripping strength. The Chew Cube can be affixed to baby or stroller using a paci/toy clip.

The Munch-it Blanket is a convenient teether and cozy blanket. It is designed in fun yet functional shapes to target baby's emerging front and eye teeth, as well as early molars. The teether is made of soft, flexible, BPA-free, food-grade silicone. The soft fabric blanket is for baby to snuggle and absorbs excess drool from chewing and/or teething. Like the Chew Cube, the Munch-it Blanket can be affixed to baby or stroller using a paci/toy clip.

"I needed something that would protect (her son's) hands, give him pain relief and keep him interested. He also needed to be able to access it himself to self-soothe."

— MELISSA SEIFERT-HYSLOP
(PICTURED WITH TWO CHILD MODELS)



EGT: Where are the products manufactured?

MSH: All of Malarkey Kids products are responsibly made in China and exceed all federal safety requirements—including CPSC (Consumer Product Safety Commission) and ASTM (American Society for Testing and Materials) regulations and the most current CPSIA (Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act).

EGT: Tell us about your experience with safety standards and regulations.

MSH: First, all of our products are BPA and phthalate free, and made from 100 percent food-grade silicone. I knew from the beginning that safety was of high importance. Being a mom, I understood that other moms care about what their babies are using, playing with and putting in their mouths.

Upon determining what the product was being made out of and how it was being designed, I took into account the CPSA and ASTM, as well as other countries' regulations. Once we had high-quality prototyping done, we tested those to all government standards in the United States, Canada and the EU. We then tested our production-quality product and the first production batch with a well-known, accredited international laboratory. We continue to test early each batch of products to these same standards every year and follow the same process with all new products.

EGT: Where are you selling now?

MSH: Our products are sold in specialty and big-box retail stores in more than 50 countries, as well as on Amazon and malarkeykids.com.

EGT: Any guidance for inventors, specifically for inventors of baby products?

MSH: Yes. Research and research some more. Do a patent search and get to know the industry. Ensure you spend the money for the most knowledgeable lawyer or patent agent possible. It's expensive but well worth it.

Also, patent, trademark and copyright your products if possible. Counterfeiting is now the largest criminal enterprise in the world. The trade in counterfeit and pirated goods is currently a \$1.7 trillion per year industry—more than drugs and human trafficking—and is expected to grow to \$2.8 trillion and cost 5.4 million jobs by 2022. 📌

Details: munchmitt.com, malarkeykids.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.



The Chew Cube Easy-Grip Teether Rattle is one of Melissa Seifert-Hyslop's inventions for babies and toddlers.



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Liz Crouch, inventor of
The Cupcake Rack;
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