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W. S. BERNERT
MATERNITY UNDERGARMENT
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Fig. 1

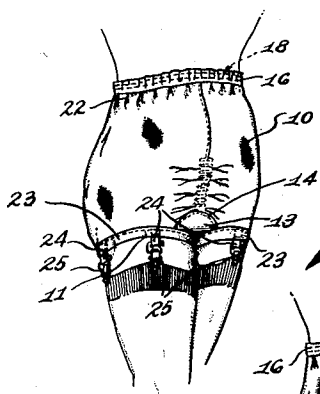


Fig. 2

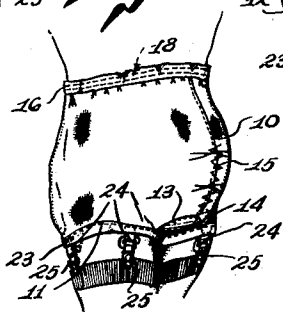


Fig. 3

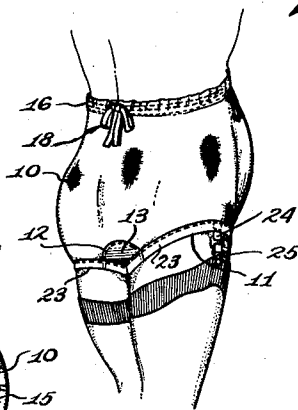


Fig. 4

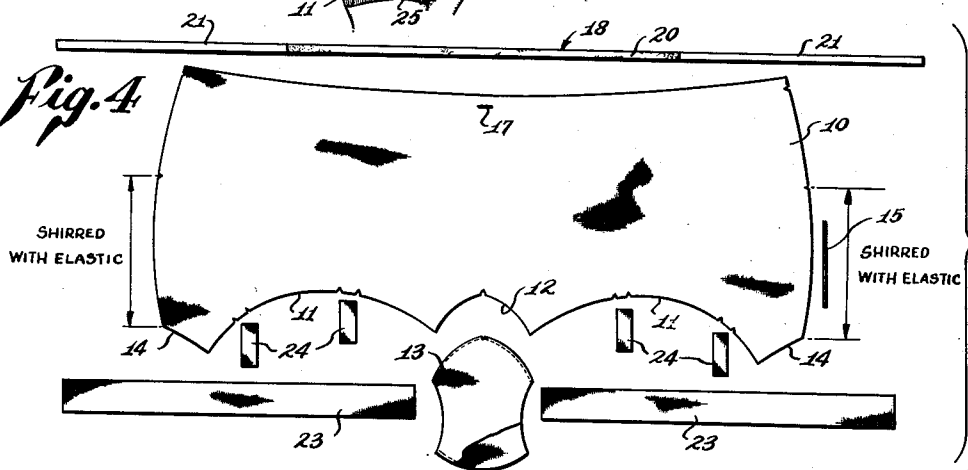
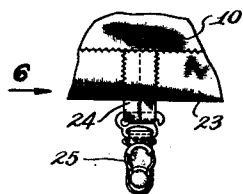


Fig. 5

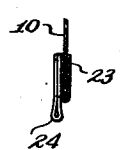


Fig. 6

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MATERNITY UNDERGARMENT

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My invention relates generally to maternity undergarments and more particularly to a panty that, in addition to its usual function, is adapted to act as a garter and hose support during the entire period of pregnancy.

One of the problems faced by women during pregnancy is that of supporting their hose or stockings without causing discomfort or considerable inconvenience. The problem of securing properly fitting and attractive garments for wear during pregnancy has been at least partially solved, but the special undergarments worn during this period normally have no provision for supporting garters that are attached to the hose. Furthermore, as the abdomen swells during the pregnancy, it is quite difficult to support the customary panty alone without additionally connecting the garters and hose to it.

Various devices have been developed that are suspended from the shoulders and extend downwardly to receive garters at their lower ends, but these devices are uncomfortable to wear, inconvenient to use, and do not do a completely satisfactory job. In some cases, the previously used garter supports have actually caused slight, if not more serious, injury by pressing against delicate and tender portions of the anatomy.

Undergarments have previously been developed that have a pouch-like portion in the front that may be extended as the abdomen swells, but during the early stages of the pregnancy the loose cloth has tended to bunch and wrinkle, and in almost all cases, the amount of extension possible is not sufficient to permit the garment to be worn during the entire pregnancy.

It is therefore a major object of my invention to provide an improved maternity panty that overcomes these previous objections.

Another object of my invention is to provide a garment of this type that is particularly adapted and intended to support not only itself, but also the hose of the wearer in the normal manner.

It is a further object of my invention to provide a garment that, by reason of its construction, fits properly from the first stages of the pregnancy until the end thereof, and is effective to support the hose during this entire period.

Still another object of my invention is to provide a maternity panty that offers mild support to the abdomen without being in the class of special garments, sometimes prescribed by physicians, that are in the nature of surgical or corrective garments.

It is a still further object of my invention to provide a simple and light-weight maternity

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panty that is easily constructed of readily available materials with a minimum of labor, and may be manufactured and sold at a very inexpensive price.

These and other objects and advantages of my invention will become apparent from the following description of a preferred form thereof, and from the drawings illustrating that form, in which:

Fig. 1 is a generally front perspective view of my improved panty on a wearer during the first stages of pregnancy;

Fig. 2 is a similar view of my panty on a wearer, during the later stages of pregnancy, and showing the expansion of the garment;

Fig. 3 is a generally rear perspective view of my improved garment on a wearer, during the later stages of pregnancy;

Fig. 4 is an exploded view of the various elements that go to make up the panty, these elements being shown as flat patterns;

Fig. 5 is a detail elevational view showing the method of attaching the garter tabs to the leg of the panty; and

Fig. 6 is a side view of the garter tab with the garter removed, taken in the direction of the arrow 6 in Fig. 5.

Referring now to the drawings and particularly to Fig. 1 thereof, it will be seen that my improved panty consists preferably of a single piece of suitable material 10, such as a knit or jersey fabric, whose ends are brought together to form a generally tube-like member. The upper edge of the piece 10 is slightly concave, and the lowest point thereof is in the back, while the ends, which are slightly higher, are in the front of the wearer, as hereinafter described.

Along its lower edge, the piece 10 is provided with concave portions 11 that form the leg openings, and in the center of the lower edge there is a notch 12 to which a crotch piece 13 is attached. At its ends, the lower edge is cut upwardly to form one side of a notch 14, and when the ends are joined together, the free end of the crotch piece 13 is attached in this notch. The flat pattern of the body piece 10 and the crotch piece 13 are shown in Fig. 4.

It should be noted that the notch 14, formed in the front of the garment, is lower than the notch 12 formed in the rear of the garment, and the leg openings 11 are shaped so that the portions adjacent the notch 14 are lower than the portions adjacent the notch 12. In the particular pattern shown, it will be noted that the lowermost portion of the rear of the garment,

the points immediately adjacent the notch 12, are substantially the same height as the apex of the front notch 14, the lowermost points of the latter being considerably below the lowermost points of the rear notch 12. From this it will be seen that the lower edge of the front of the garment extends below the rear of the garment, and by reason of the generally concave shape of the upper edge, the upper edge of the front is above the rear of the garment.

The ends of the piece 10 are given a convex shape as indicated in Fig. 4, and consequently when these ends are joined together, the resulting tube-like garment has an enlargement or slight protuberance in its center. This enlargement, it will be noted, is formed primarily in the front of the garment, and it, combined with the extra length of the front, provides the necessary space or fullness for the enlarged abdomen.

This front fullness, it will be appreciated, is neither necessary nor desirable during the early stages of the pregnancy, but more important is the fact that if this fullness is allowed to remain, the garments can offer no support to either hose or the body of the wearer. Consequently, I have provided an elastic or resilient section that prevents the fullness from being objectionable, and also offers the necessary support. To do this, I include a piece of elastic cord or tape 15 in the seam joining the ends of the piece 10 together. The elastic 15 is applied in its elongated or stretched condition, and thereafter, when the tension holding it in this condition is released, the elastic contracts and the lower front portion of the garment is shirred. This shirring, it will be realized, draws the upper and lower edges of the garment together, so that the front and rear portions are more nearly at the same height. The previously mentioned fullness is taken up by the shirring, but as the abdomen enlarges, the elastic stretches to provide just the amount of fullness needed.

In addition to the enlargement of the lower abdomen, the waistline is also increased, and consequently provision must be made to expand the upper edge or waistband of the garment. While this may be done by providing a drawstring or tape, such an arrangement provides no resilience or stretch, and the normal movements of the wearer quickly cause the garment to slip downwardly. If the drawstring is tightened sufficiently to retain the garment in position despite the normal body movements, the tape will be so tight as to be very uncomfortable, if not cause actual injury to the wearer.

Elastic or resilient waistbands have been used, and these have the advantage of stretching with the movements of the wearer so that the garment is held in the proper position. However, as the upper abdomen or waistline increases, particularly during the later stages of the pregnancy, the limit of elasticity is reached, and no further expansion of the waistband can take place. The normal expansion of the waistline during pregnancy is such that a waistband which fits properly and supports the garment in the correct manner during the early stages of the pregnancy, will be stretched to its elastic limit before the later stages of the pregnancy are reached. As a result, a single garment cannot be used during the entire pregnancy, but instead at least two and possibly more sizes are required.

To overcome these difficulties, I have provided a waistband using a drawstring or tape having both elastic and inelastic portions. To provide

this waistband, the upper edge of the piece 10 is folded over and sewn to form a generally tube-like section or casing 16. In the center of the rear of the garment I provide an aperture 17, constructed generally similar to a button hole, and opening into the casing 16 so that a drawstring 18 within the casing may extend through the aperture for manual adjustment. As shown in Fig. 4, the tape 13 includes an elastic portion 20 adapted to encircle the major portion of the body of the wearer, and each end of the elastic portion is provided with an inelastic portion 21 extending therefrom.

The drawstring or tape 18 is inserted in the casing 16 so that the two inelastic portions 21 project through the aperture 17 where they may be tied, as indicated in Fig. 3. During the early stages of the pregnancy, the greater portion of the inelastic sections 21 will extend through the aperture 17, and be taken up by the knot. As the waistline increases during the later stages of the pregnancy, more and more of the inelastic portions 21 will be admitted into the casing 16 through the aperture 17, thereby permitting the natural and unrestricted enlargement of the upper abdomen, while providing the resilient or elastic effect so necessary to retain the garment in its proper position. During the early stages of the pregnancy, the upper edge of the garment will have gathers 22 formed in it by reason of the smaller diameter of the drawstring 18. During the most advanced stages of the pregnancy, the waistband has been increased by adjustment of the inelastic portion 21 of the drawstring 18, and the gathers 22 are substantially eliminated, or at least greatly reduced. Even at this period, of course, a certain amount of expansion or extension of the waistband is desirable to accommodate the normal body movements of the wearer.

To provide for garter and hose support, the lower edges of the garment, including the leg openings 11, are bound with a tape 23 or similar binding material to provide a finished appearance and to prevent the tearing or raveling of the material forming the piece 10. Additionally, the binding 23 acts as a reinforcing member to receive garter tabs 24 formed of tape that is looped and has its ends attached to the binding as shown in Figs. 5 and 6. The portions of the tabs 24 projecting below the binding 23 are loops through which garter fasteners 25 may be inserted in the customary manner. While the exact location of the garter tabs 24 is not of extreme importance, they should not be located at the rear of the garment where they will be pressed into the leg of the wearer when she sits. I have found that by placing one tab at the front of each leg and one at the outside, as indicated in Figs. 1, 2 and 3, very satisfactory results are obtained.

In order for the stockings or hose to be properly supported, the lower edge of the garment must be substantially anchored with respect to the legs of the wearer, with due allowance being made for her body movements. In undergarments intended for wear where no pregnancy exists, this is easily accomplished by holding the upper edge of the garment at the waistline by making the waistband snug fitting. In maternity garments where the waistline of the wearer is progressively increasing, the provision of a snug fitting waistband presents more problems, but these have been solved in the present garment by the use of the drawstring having both elastic and inelastic portions.

In addition to the retention of the waistband

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in the proper position, an undergarment intended to support the hose must also have provision for holding the lower edge of the garment at the same distance from the upper edge thereof at all times. Because of the necessary fullness in the front of such garments, this problem has heretofore been unsolved. Elastic members have heretofore been used to shirr or gather the garment in a horizontal direction, thereby eliminating the fullness prior to the distention of the abdomen, but it will be realized that an elastic member that is stretched in a horizontal direction is of no particular value in transmitting a force in a vertical direction. Consequently, prior garments of this type have not had the lower edge thereof sufficiently anchored to support the wearer's hose in the proper manner.

With my improved garment, the vertically extending elastic member 15 that is incorporated in the front seam of the garment acts to remove the fullness in the front of the garment during the early stages of the pregnancy. Additionally, because the elastic member 15 does extend in a substantially vertical direction, it supports the lower edge of the garment with sufficient firmness so that garter members 25 may be attached to it and properly support the hose. As the pregnancy advances and the abdomen enlarges, the elastic member 15 is stretched to provide the fullness of the garment that is necessary to accommodate the abdomen. At the same time, a slight amount of support is given to the abdomen, and the lower edge of the garment is retained in the proper position.

Because of the provision for expansion of the waistband, and the use of the elastic member 15 that will extend the amount necessary to accommodate the maximum enlargement of the abdomen while still properly supporting the hose, a single, properly fitted garment may be worn throughout the entire pregnancy. In this way, it is not necessary to buy one garment for use during the early stages of the pregnancy, and then discard this garment and purchase a larger one for use during the later stages. Since the need for such garments is usually ended before they are worn out, this represents a considerable saving to the wearer.

One of the important features of my design is the provision of the convex ends of the piece 10. When these ends are joined, a pouch-like section is formed, as previously mentioned, that insures ample room for the expansion of the abdomen without any downward strain being placed upon the garment. Additionally, the increased length of the garment in the front portion, combined with the pouch-like section, insures that the upper edge of the garment may be held above the stomach or abdomen, even in the advanced stages of pregnancy.

It will be noted that the body encircling portion of the garment is shown as a single piece 10 having a single seam down the front of the garment. While a two-piece garment may be constructed, this is not necessary, and the elimination of unnecessary seams represents a considerable saving in the manufacture of the garments, and adds materially to their strength and life. Consequently, in addition to being more comfortable and providing heretofore unavailable advantages, my improved garment may also be made more inexpensively.

These and other modifications may easily be made by those skilled in the art and clearly fall within the scope of my invention. Consequently,

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while I have shown and described a preferred form of my undergarment, I do not wish to be restricted to the particular form or arrangement of parts herein described and shown, except as limited by my claims.

I claim:

1. A maternity undergarment which includes: a one-piece body member of fabric-like material adapted to fit around the lower portion of the torso, said member having a generally concave upper edge and a lower edge with concave leg openings formed therein, said lower edge being highest in the middle of said member, where said upper edge is the lowest, the ends of said member being generally convex and joined together to form a generally tubular member having a single substantial vertical seam extending down the front of the garment in the center thereof, said tubular member having a fullness in the front thereof adapted to accommodate the abdomen in the final stages of pregnancy; elastic means incorporated in a portion of said body member acting to gather said fullness to fit the abdomen in the initial stages of pregnancy; and a waistband member comprising a drawstring having elastic and inelastic portions, said elastic portion acting to provide the necessary resilience to conform to body motions, and said inelastic portion being adjustable to conform to the size of the waist at any time during pregnancy.

2. A maternity undergarment which includes: a one-piece body member of fabric-like material adapted to fit around the lower portion of the torso, said member having a generally concave upper edge and a lower edge with concave leg openings formed therein, said lower edge being highest in the middle of said member, where said upper edge is the lowest, the ends of said member being generally convex and joined together to form a generally tubular member and having a single substantial vertical seam extending down the front of the garment in the center thereof, said tubular member having a fullness in the front thereof adapted to accommodate the abdomen in the final stages of pregnancy; elastic means extending generally vertically along at least a portion of said body member and acting to gather said fullness to fit the abdomen in the initial stages of pregnancy while being expandable to fit the abdomen as the latter distends, said elastic means supporting the lower edge of said body member so that stockings may be supported therefrom; and an adjustable waistband member adapted to conform to the size of the waist at any time during pregnancy.

3. A maternity undergarment which includes: a one-piece body member of fabric-like material adapted to fit around the lower portion of the torso, said member having a generally concave upper edge and a lower edge with concave leg openings formed therein, said lower edge being highest in the middle of said member, where said upper edge is the lowest, the ends of said member being generally convex and joined together to form a generally tubular member and having a single substantial vertical seam extending down the front of the garment in the center thereof, said tubular member having a fullness in the front thereof adapted to accommodate the abdomen in the final stages of pregnancy; elastic means extending generally vertically along at least a portion of said body member and acting to gather said fullness to fit the abdomen in the initial stages of pregnancy

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while being expandable to fit the abdomen as the latter distends, said elastic means supporting the lower edge of said body member so that stockings may be supported therefrom; and a waistband member comprising a drawstring

having elastic and inelastic portions, said elastic portion acting to provide the necessary resilience to conform to body motions, and said inelastic portion being adjustable to conform to the size of the waist at any time during pregnancy.

4. A maternity undergarment which includes: a one-piece body member of fabric-like material adapted to fit around the lower portion of the torso, said member having a generally concave upper edge and a lower edge with concave leg openings formed therein, said lower edge being highest in the middle of said member, where said upper edge is the lowest, the ends of said member being generally convex and joined together to form a generally tubular member having a single substantial vertical seam extending down the front of the garment in the center thereof, said tubular member having a fullness in the front thereof adapted to accommodate the abdomen in the final stages of pregnancy; elastic means attached to said body member in said seam thereof, extending upwardly from the lower edge of said member and attached in a manner to shirr the front portion of said member and vertically take up the fullness therein to fit the abdomen in the initial stages of pregnancy, said elastic means also acting to support the lower edge of said body member at the cen-

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tral forward section thereof during the entire pregnancy; and a waistband member comprising a drawstring having an elastic tape connected to the upper edge of said body member and extending at least partially around said tubular member, said elastic tape having an inelastic tape section attached at each end thereof, said inelastic tape sections projecting from said tubular member for adjustment, said elastic tape acting to provide the necessary resilience to conform to body motions, and said inelastic sections being adjustable to increase the diameter of said waistband to conform to the size of the waist at any time during pregnancy.

5. A maternity undergarment as defined in claim 4 having garter tabs attached to the lower edge of said body member at the leg openings, at least one garter tab of each leg opening being positioned to exert a downward pull on said elastic means when said garter tab is urged downwardly, said pull being resisted by said elastic means which thereby furnishes the principal support for said garter tab.

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