March 12, 1963 S. S. ALBERTS 3,080,869

MATERNITY GARMENT

Filed Sept. 21, 1959 4 Sheets-Sheet 1

FIG. 1

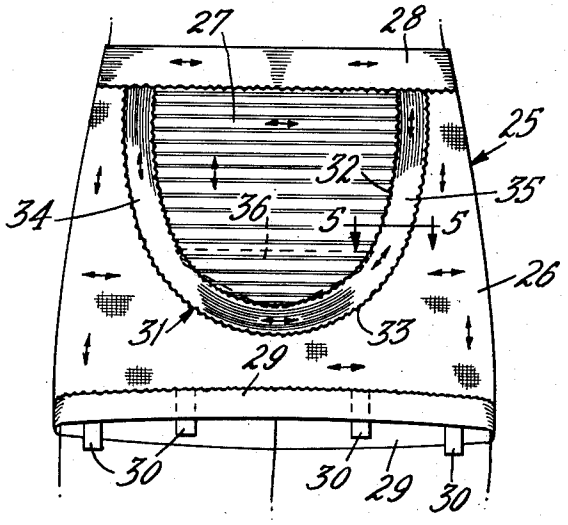


FIG. 2

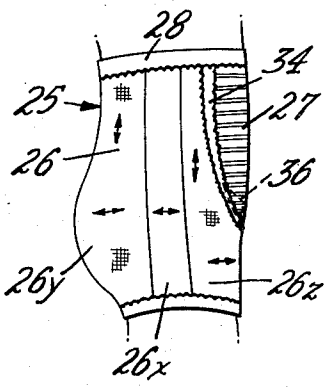


FIG. 3

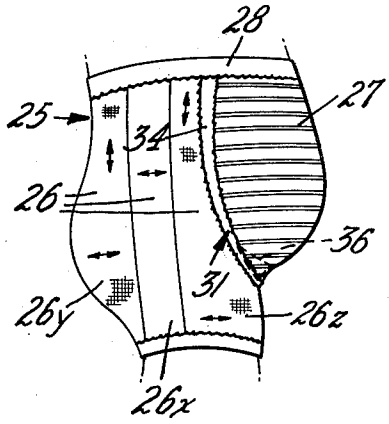


FIG. 4

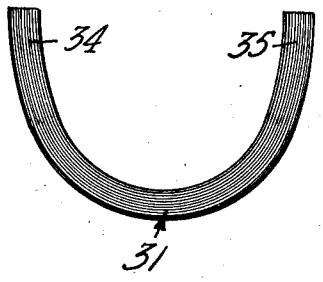
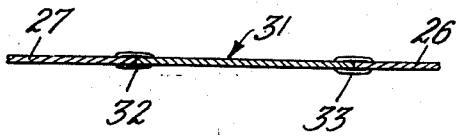


FIG. 5



INVENTOR.
SYDNEY S. ALBERTS

BY

Pennie, Edmonds, Morton, Barrows & Taylor
ATTORNEYS

March 12, 1963 S. S. ALBERTS 3,080,869

MATERNITY GARMENT

Filed Sept. 21, 1959

4 Sheets-Sheet 2

FIG. 7

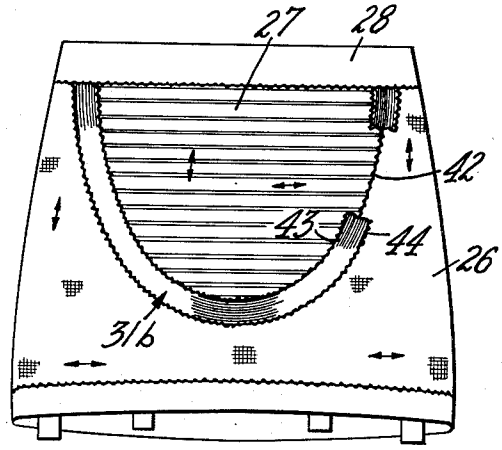


FIG. 6

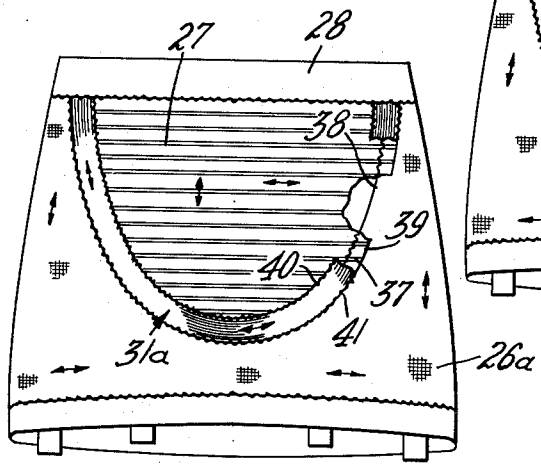


FIG. 9

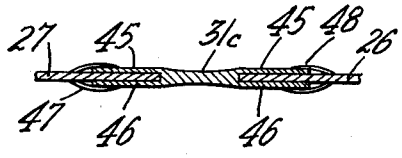


FIG. 8

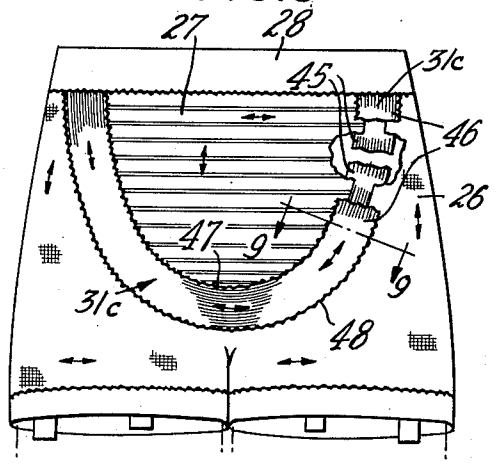
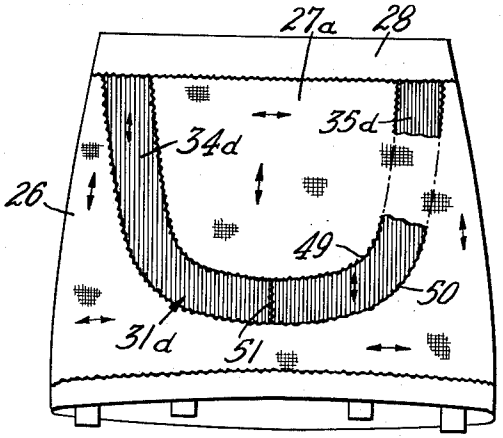


FIG. 10



INVENTOR.
SYDNEY S. ALBERTS

BY

Pennie, Edmonds, Morton, Barrows & Taylor

ATTORNEYS

March 12, 1963 S. S. ALBERTS 3,080,869

MATERNITY GARMENT

Filed Sept. 21, 1959 4 Sheets-Sheet 3

FIG. 11

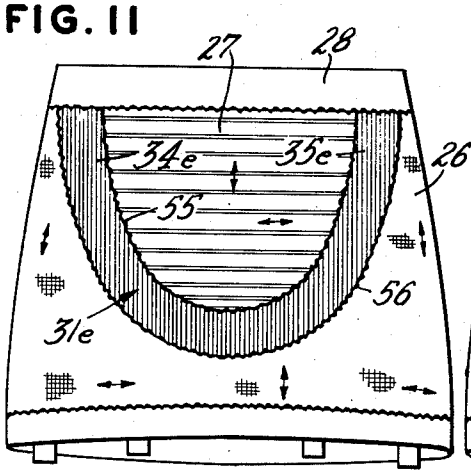


FIG. 12

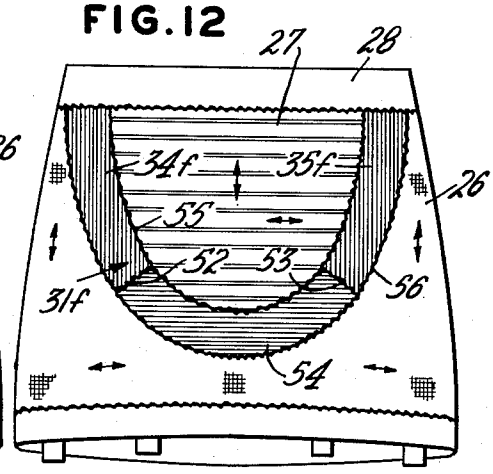


FIG. 13

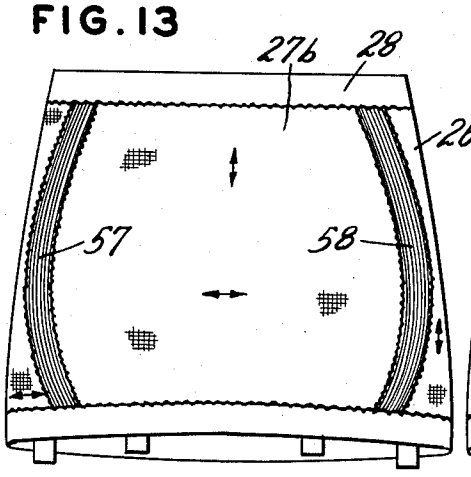


FIG. 14

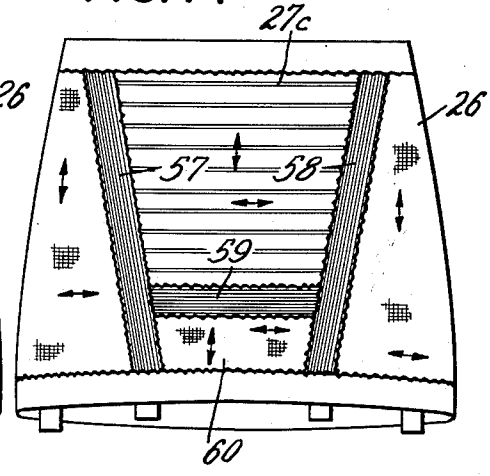


FIG. 15

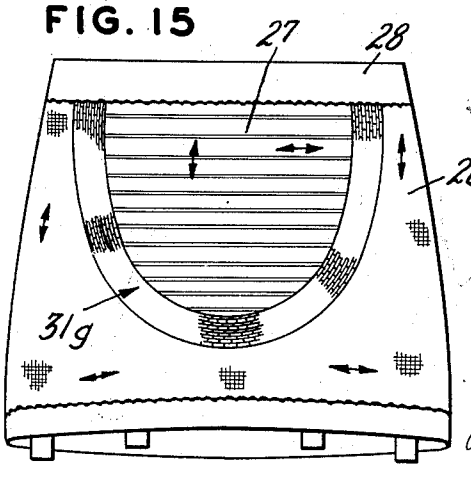
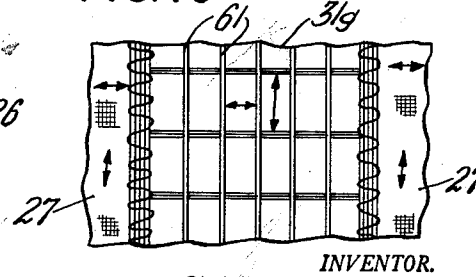


FIG. 16



INVENTOR.
SYDNEY S. ALBERTS

BY

Annie, Edmonds, Morton, Barrows & Taylor
ATTORNEYS

March 12, 1963 S. S. ALBERTS 3,080,869

MATERNITY GARMENT

Filed Sept. 21, 1959 4 Sheets-Sheet 4

FIG. 17

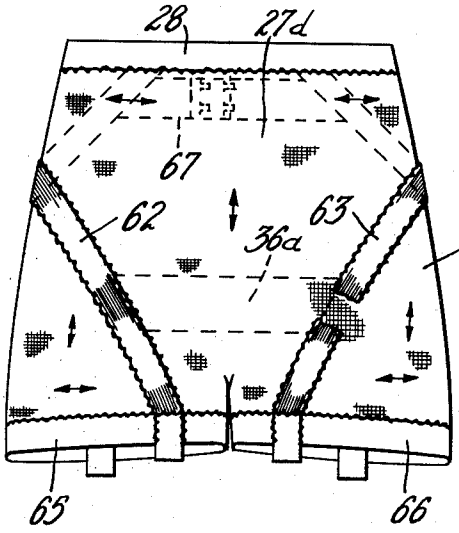


FIG. 18

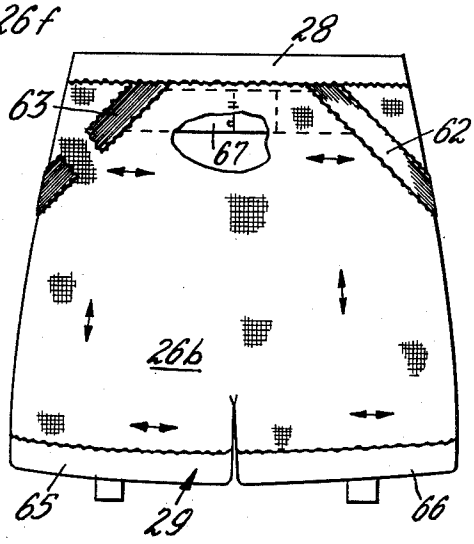


FIG. 19

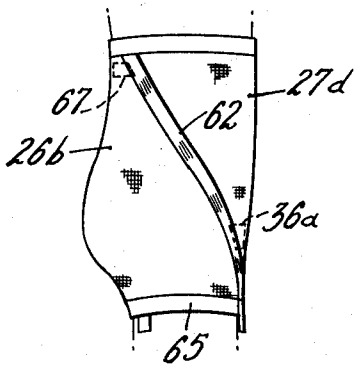


FIG. 20

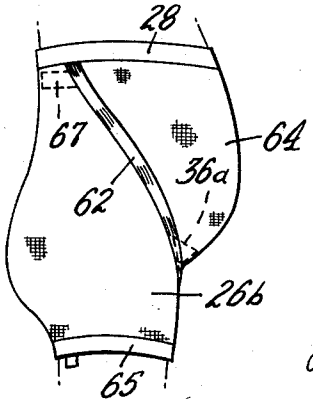
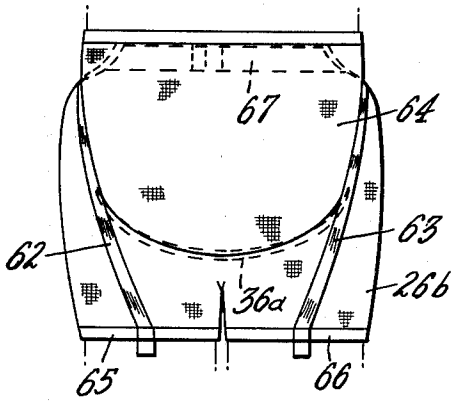


FIG. 21



INVENTOR.
SYDNEY S. ALBERTS

BY

Pennie, Edmonds, Morton, Barrow, & Taylor

ATTORNEYS

United States Patent Office 3,080,869
Patented Mar. 12, 1963

3,080,869

MATERNITY GARMENT

Sydney S. Alberts, Yonkers, N.Y.
(44 E. 32nd St., New York, N.Y.)

Filed Sept. 21, 1959, Ser. No. 841,132
12 Claims. (Cl. 128—542)

This invention relates to improvements in maternity garments such for example as a maternity girdle, or other garment, for providing abdominal support and control, as well as the control of the thighs, hips and buttocks of a woman during pregnancy.

The primary object of the invention is to provide a maternity garment which may be worn throughout the period of progressive development of the pregnancy and which does not require adjustment.

Another object of the invention is to provide a maternity garment of the girdle, or panty-girdle, type having provision for adequate control of the thighs, hips and buttocks, and at the same time permitting the required expansion of the area of the abdomen without harmful pressure thereon, but with the desired degree of support and control.

In accordance with the invention the improved garment includes a body-encircling structure extending from waist to hips after the manner of the ordinary girdle, that is to say, the vertical extent of the garment is similar to that of the usual girdle or panty-girdle, and in general the material is of a similar nature to that used in such garments. The body-encircling structure includes a main or body portion for control of the sides, back, and part of the front of the wearer, in the usual manner, and an abdomen-supporting front panel portion. According to the invention these two portions, that is, the front panel abdomen-supporting portion and the main or body portion are divided by means of a strip of narrow fabric which is stretchable longitudinally, but laterally relatively non-stretchable, this strip being separate and distinct from the material of the garment and being secured along its opposite edges to the respective panel and body portions of the garment. As to its lateral stretchability the strip may be completely inextensible, or it may be slightly stretchable.

Both the front panel portion and the body portion of the garment are made advantageously of two-way stretch material such as two-way elastic fabric. Advantageously, also, the material of the front panel portion is more easily stretchable, that is, it is more extensible, has less resistance to extension, than the material of the body portion of the garment. The body portion is provided with sufficiently firm resistance to extension to hold in place the thighs and hips and part of the front of the body in accordance with the requirements of the particular garment design and, advantageously, the front panel will have considerably less resistance to extension than the body portion so as to give it a soft character. The control or division strip separating and interconnecting the front abdomen-supporting panel portion and the main or body portion may have any desired longitudinal resistance to extension. Advantageously also, the garment is provided with a waistband along the top edge thereof and the terminal portion of the control strip along each side of the panel portion is secured to this band. Should the band be omitted, however, the connection of the terminal portion of the control strip is made to the top or upper area of the garment.

When the garment is put on by the wearer such control strip at each side of the panel portion is subjected to tension through its upper terminal portion being held or supported by the upper area of the garment or by the waistband, and through its lower portion being secured

either to the body portion of the garment or to the bottom edge of the garment. In either case a lengthwise pull is exerted on the control strip at each side of the panel, such pull usually being occasioned by the attachment of garters at the bottom of the garment and by the support of the upper terminal portion of the strip by its connection to the waistband or to the upper area of the garment.

This pull or tension on the control strip at each side of the front panel causes the strip to exert lateral resistance to the pull of the fabric of the body portion, and hence this lateral pull of the body portion on the opposite sides of the front panel portion is reduced or minimized and this enables the panel portion to stretch more easily. In other words, the strip serves as a tension buffer or absorber to take up a good part of the tension or pull of the body portion of the garment upon the front panel, shielding the front panel portion from the tension of the body portion and so preserving the stretchability of the front panel for the expanding needs of the wearer's enlarging abdomen.

As a result of the presence of the dividing or control strip referred to, the main portion of the garment covering the side and rear sections and part of the front of the body will have a greater circumferential resistance to extension and so give the desired firm support to the thighs and hips, and the front panel section will have a lesser circumferential resistance to extension and thus be free to expand as required during the development of the pregnancy.

Furthermore, the dividing or control strip, or strips, and their relation to the body and panel portions of the garment may be varied in a number of ways. For example, the control strip may be interposed between the two garment portions or sections and this may be variously accomplished such as by the use of a double-lip elastic, or by seaming the opposite edges of the strip to the adjacent edges of the body and side sections. Also, the control strip may be secured along its opposite edges to and superimposed upon an overlapping seam joining the two fabric sections or portions. Also, the control strip may be secured along its opposite edges to and superimposed upon a butted seam between the two fabric sections. Further the main or body portion and the front panel may be made of a continuous piece of uniform two-way stretch material, and the control strip or strips superimposed on and secured along its opposite edges to such material.

When the front panel is of easily stretchable material it is advantageously straight across the top where it is connected to the waistband or top area of the garment, and is rounded at the bottom, so that the control strips at each side are joined in a curve at the bottom forming a U. Advantageously, this U-shaped control strip is of unitary or one-piece continuous construction with the stretching characteristics referred to. However, if desired, each U-shaped control strip may be made in two or more sections lengthwise and joined together at their ends.

In addition, a shaped strip in the general form of the letter U may be cut from a sheet of one-way stretch fabric with the direction of stretch being lengthwise of the vertical arms of the U and with no stretch, or substantially no stretch, in the horizontal direction of the base of the U. A further modification is to cut the structure just referred to from a two-way stretch fabric, but either of these latter constructions may be made in two or more sections joined at their ends to form a shape similar to the letter U. In addition, a control strip may be made as in the last three constructions, but in three or more sections so related to the direction of stretch of the fabric that the direction of stretch is substantially the same for all of the cut sections forming the U shape.

The invention will be further understood from a consideration of the accompanying drawings showing a number of modifications and the description thereof in reference to these drawings. In these drawings:

FIG. 1 is a view in front elevation of a maternity girdle made according to my present invention and shown in position on a human figure;

FIG. 2 is a side elevation of the garment as shown in FIG. 1 and drawn to a somewhat smaller scale;

FIG. 3 is a view similar to FIG. 2 showing the expansion of the garment as occasioned by a considerably later development of the pregnancy;

FIG. 4 is a detailed view of the control strip shown in FIGURES 1, 2, and 3.

FIG. 5 is a detailed section taken on line 5—5 of FIG. 1;

FIG. 6 is a view similar to FIGURE 1, but showing a modified arrangement of the seaming;

FIG. 7 is a view also similar to FIGURE 1 showing another modification of the seaming;

FIG. 8 is a view similar to FIGURE 1 showing a panty-type garment and the use of a control strip composed of double-lip elastic;

FIG. 9 is a detailed section taken on line 9—9 of FIGURE 8;

FIG. 10 is a view similar to FIGURE 1, but showing a modified form of the invention;

FIG. 11 is a view similar to FIG. 10 showing a modified form of control strip;

FIG. 12 is also a view similar to FIG. 10 showing another modification of the control strip;

FIG. 13 is a view similar to FIG. 1 but showing another modified form of the invention;

FIG. 14 is a view similar to FIG. 1 but showing a still further modification.

FIG. 15 is a view similar to FIGURE 1 showing a modified form of control strip;

FIG. 16 is an enlarged view of a fragment of the control strip of FIGURE 15;

FIG. 17 is a view similar to FIGURE 1 of a further modified form of the garment of the invention;

FIG. 18 is a rear view of the garment shown in FIGURE 17;

FIG. 19 is a side view of FIGURE 17 drawn to a smaller scale;

FIG. 20 is a view similar to FIGURE 19 showing the expansion of the garment as occasioned by a considerably later development of the pregnancy; and

FIG. 21 is a front view corresponding to FIGURE 20.

The invention may be embodied in a number of different kinds of garments in addition to the girdle type previously referred to. Thus it may be embodied in a panty girdle, a panty brief, a garter panty, a panty, in tights or any other garment.

Now referring to the accompanying drawings, FIGURES 1–5 show the invention embodied in a girdle **25**. This girdle has a main or body portion **26** covering the sides, hips and part of the front of the wearer's body, and a front abdomen-supporting panel portion **27**. The main or body portion **26** comprises all of the garment except the front panel portion **27**. Body portion **26** is advantageously woven in one piece of strong two-way stretch fabric, that is, fabric having sufficient resistance to extension to control the thighs, hips and part of the front of the wearer's body. Main or body portion **26** may, however, be constructed in sections. In FIGURES 2 and 3 it is shown as being made in four sections, namely, two side sections **26***x*, a back section **26***y* and the front part or section **26***z*, although it may be made with additional sections, if desired.

These various sections may be made of material having different characteristics as is common in garments of this kind. Thus, for example, the two side sections **26***x* may be stretchable horizontally or circumferentially, as indicated, but substantially in extensible vertically, while the rear section **26***y* may be extensible vertically, but substantially inextensible circumferentially. The front part **26***z* should be extensible horizontally, but may, if desired, under certain circumstances, have little or no vertical extensibility. The garment has a waist band **28** surrounding the top, and a band **29** at the bottom to which the usual garter tabs **30** may be secured.

The front panel **27** extends downwardly from band **28**, and a U-shaped control strip **31** is interposed between the edges of panel **72** and the U-shaped edge of body portion **26**. As shown in FIGURE 5 the control strip **31** is in the same plane as the front panel portion **27** and the front part of body portion **26**. It is secured thereto by lines of stitching **32** and **33**. One leg **34** of the control strip **31** is disposed on the left side of the front panel **27** and the other leg **35** on the right side.

The front panel portion **27** is of soft two-way stretch material having considerably less resistance to extension than body portion **26**. The control strip **31** with its side portions **34** and **35** is a conventionally woven strip of narrow elastic fabric, separate and distinct from the fabric of the garment, and advantageously has somewhat less resistance to extension lengthwise than the vertical resistance to extension of the front panel **27**.

Comparing FIGURES 2 and 3 it will be understood that during the development of the pregnancy the material of front panel **27** expands to a very considerable extent, whereas, the material of the body portion **26** may or may not be stretched very much. Advantageously, the U-shaped control strip **31** is so disposed as to approximately follow the natural crease of the body between the upper legs and the abdomen. It is supported at its upper terminal portions by waist band **28** and is subjected to downward tension both by the snug fit of the girdle under the hips and by the pull of the garters on the garter tabs.

This lengthwise, vertical pull is applied to the side portions **34** and **35** of strip **31** by the attachment of the lower or central portion of the control strip to the body section or portion **26** of the garment, and in this form of the invention such connection is at a distance from the lower edge of the girdle. The lengthwise, vertical pull thus applied to the side strips **34** and **35** restrains the force of extension of the body portion **26** from applying lateral pull to the sides of the front panel **27**, that is, the horizontal or crosswise tension of the body portion **26** is absorbed by the side strips **34** and **35** thereby leaving the capacity for extension of front panel **27** to be utilized in accommodating the enlarged abdomen.

In FIGURES 1, 2 and 3 the usual sling **36** has been indicated by dotted lines. This is a short piece of firm but soft-finished elastic material two or more inches wide and secured at its ends in the inner seams between the control strip **31** and the front panel **27** and also attached centrally to the garment. This sling may or may not be included, as desired.

Referring now to FIGURE 6 the garment illustrated is like that just described except in the manner of joining the edges of the front panel **27** and the body panel **26***a* and the method of mounting the control strip **31***a*. Instead of inserting the control strip as in FIGURES 1–5 between the edges of the main and front portions, the marginal edge **37** of panel portion **27** is placed in overlapping relation to the marginal edge portion **38** of the main portion **26***a*, and these parts are stitched together along a seam line **39**. Thereupon the control strip **31***a* is placed so as to overlie seaming line **39** and is stitched along its inner and outer edges **40** and **41** to the respective underlying fabrics.

In FIGURE 7 the marginal edges of the front panel **27** and the body portion **26** are joined by means of a butt seam along a line **42**. Then the control strip **31***b* is placed so as to overlie the fabrics on both sides of this seam **42** and is stitched in place along its edges **43** and **44**.

In the construction shown in FIGURES 8 and 9 the

control strip **31** is woven with double lips **45** and **46** along both edges. In constructing the garment the double lips **45** and **46** are placed on the opposite sides of the marginal edge of front panel **27** and sewed together.

Similarly, the marginal edge of main body portion **26** is placed within the lips **45**, **46** and joined by stitching **48**.

In FIGURE 10 there is illustrated a modification wherein the entire garment is woven in one piece so that the material of the front panel **27***a* has the same resistance to extension as the main body portion **26**, both being of two-way stretch material. Moreover, the U-shaped control strip **31***d* overlies the fabric of the garment and is secured thereto by stitching along its opposite edges, as shown at **49** and **50**. As shown, the control strip is constructed in two similar halves which have been stitched together along a vertical seam **51** at the bottom of the U. It will be understood, however, that the control strip may be made in one piece if desired.

In addition to the superposing of the control strip on the surface of the garment fabric, as described above, another feature of this modification is that control strip **31***d* is cut from a sheet of one-way stretch fabric so that the legs or side portions **34***d* and **35***d* are stretchable lengthwise and substantially non-stretchable laterally, whereas the connecting bottom portion of the U between these two side portions is stretchable vertically or laterally, but substantially non-stretchable lengthwise or horizontally.

Referring now to FIGURE 11 this form of garment is similar to that shown in FIGURE 10 in that the U-shaped control strip **31***e* is cut from one piece of one-way stretch material so that the control strip has the same characteristics as described in connection with the control strip **31***d* of FIGURE 10. That is to say, the side strips **34***e* and **35***e* are stretchable lengthwise, but not laterally whereas the interconnecting portion of the bottom is stretchable laterally but not lengthwise. As shown in FIGURE 11 this control strip is in one piece instead of being made from two pieces and stitched together at the bottom as in FIGURE 10. Of course control strip **31***e* may be made in two pieces, if desired.

A feature of the garments of FIGURES 11 and 12 is that, like FIGURE 1, the front control panel **27** is of two-way stretch material which has less resistance to extension than the two-way stretch material of the one-piece garment of FIGURE 10.

In the garment of FIGURE 12 the front panel portion **27** and the body portion **26** are like that of FIGURE 11, but the U-shaped control strip **31***f* differs from the control strip **31***e* in that it is made in three sections stitched together by the cross stitches **52** and **53**. The two sides **34***f* and **35***f* are also substantially the same as the sides **34***e* and **35***e* of FIGURE 11 in that they are cut or stamped from a sheet of one-way stretch material in such a way that these sides are stretchable lengthwise, but non-stretchable laterally.

The bottom interconnecting section **54** is also cut or stamped from a sheet of similar material in such a way that the section is stretchable lengthwise, that is, horizontally of the garment, but non-stretchable laterally, that is, vertically of the garment. By stitching these three sections together, as shown, a control strip is formed which is substantially similar to the control strip **31** of FIGURE 1. That is to say, control strip **31***f* is lengthwise stretchable substantially throughout the length of its U-shape.

It will be understood that both the control strip **31***e* of FIGURE 11 and **31***f* of FIGURE 12 are secured along their inner margins **55** to the material of the front panel portions **27**, and that they are secured along their outer edges **56** by stitching to the body portion **26**. The front panel portions **27** in both FIGURE 11 and FIGURE 12 are arranged in the same plane as the front part of body portion **26**. The seaming between the U-shaped edges of the front panels **27** of both these figures and the adjacent edges of the body portions **26** underlie the respective control strips **31***e* and **31***f*. Such seaming may be of any desired form, as described above in connection with FIGURES 6 and 7, or otherwise.

In the modification, shown in FIGURE 13, the body portion **26** is of two-way stretch material similar to that of FIGURE 10, and the front panel **27***b* is also of the same material, that is, it is a one-piece garment like FIGURE 10. Front panel **27***b* has outwardly and symmetrically curved sides and extends substantially throughout the height of the garment. Front panel **27***b* is divided from main body portion **26** by means of a curved control strip **57**, on one side, and second outwardly curved control strip **58**, on the opposite side.

These strips are extensible lengthwise and substantially inextensible laterally, the same as the side strips **34** and **35** of FIGURE 1, but they extend from the top substantially to the bottom of the garment and serve to divide the panel portion **27***b* from the body portion **26** and function in substantially the same way as the side strips **34** and **35**. It will be understood that each of these control strips is stitched along its opposite edges to panel **27***b* on one side and to the main body portion **26** on the opposite side.

The construction shown in FIGURE 14 is similar to that shown and described in connection with FIGURE 13 except that the control strips are straight and are wider apart at the top than at the bottom. Also a horizontal interconnecting strip **59** is spaced from the bottom of the garment by about the same distance as the lower portions of the control strips of the previous figures so that the panel **27***c* functions in substantially the same way as panel **27** of FIGURE 1, and the other previous figures.

The small lower section **60** below the connecting strip **59** may be either continuous with the material of the body portion **26**, or may be made of two-way stretch material and joined at its sides to the material of body portion **26**. Connecting portion **59** is made of lengthwise one-way stretch material similar to the material of strips **57** and **58**, and thus produces a control of the human figure which is similar in substantially all respects to the control of front panel **27** in FIGURE 1. A modified control may be produced by making the interconnection **59** of material which is stretchable in the vertical direction, but non-stretchable horizontally and thus produces a control similar to the garment of FIGURE 11.

Referring to FIGURES 15 and 16 the garment shown is substantially identical with the garment of FIGURE 1, having a front control panel **27** of soft two-way stretch material and a body portion **26** of considerably firmer two-way stretch material. The one-piece control strip **31***g* is like control piece **31** except that it is extensible to a slight extent in the lateral direction, instead of being substantially inextensible. This is indicated in FIGURE 16 which shows a fragmentary portion of strip **31***g* as it appears under lateral stress.

The longitudinal threads which are shown in contact with one another in FIGURE 15 have been separated somewhat, it being understood, however, that FIGURE 16 is a considerably magnified view. The intention is that when the garment is in place on the body of the wearer the control strip is stretched width-wise substantially to its limit. Hence, it functions in much the same way as the laterally inextensible control strip **31**.

Now referring to FIGURES 17–21 there is here shown a modified form of maternity garment which is constructed in panty girdle form and which, like the garments of FIGURES 10 and 13, is constructed of one piece of uniform two-way stretch material. Thus, the material of the main or body portion **26***b* has the same degree of resistance to extension in both directions as the material of the front abdomen-supporting panel portion **27***d*.

The control strips **62** and **63** are similar to control strips **57** and **58** of the garments of FIGURES 13 and 14, but their upper terminal portions are secured to the waist

band **28** or top portion of the garment at the back instead of at the front and, consequently, these strips extend around the sides of the wearer, as shown in FIGURES 17 and 18. The result is a substantial widening of the upper part of front panel portion **27***d*, so that the upper part of this portion extends around the sides of the garment and the wearer, as shown particularly in FIGURE. 18.

It will be observed, however, that these control strips **62** and **63** are nearly straight in side view (FIGURE 19) and like previously described control strips (see FIGURE 3, for example) they follow the natural crease of the body between the upper legs and abdomen. This may be seen particularly in FIGURES 20 and 21. Consequently, these strips are located at the opposite sides of the area **64** of the panel portion **27***d* which is most greatly stretched or enlarged during the development of the pregnancy (FIGURES 20 and 21).

As before, the lower terminal portions of control strips **62** and **63** are connected to the bottom edges of the garment, as, for example, to the leg bands **65** and **66** to which the garter tabs, or garters themselves (not shown) may be attached. In fact, as shown the front garter tabs are attached directly to the lower terminal portions of the control strips **62** and **63** respectively, although this is not necessary.

It will be understood that each of the control strips **62** and **63** is secured by stitching along its opposite edges to the material of the respective garment portions, that is, the panel portions **27***d* and **26***b*, the control strips being placed in overlying relation to the surface of the material of the garment. Both this garment and the garment of FIGURE 15, being of uniform two-way stretch material, may be made from circular knit fabric.

If desired, a sling **36***a* may be placed substantially as shown in FIGURES 17 and 21, that is, at the lower portion of the abdomen, and secured at its opposite ends by stitching to the inner surface of the garment opposite the inner lines of stitching of the two control strips **62** and **63**. Also, if desired, a reinforcing or supplemental short strip of one-way stretch elastic material **67** may be placed at the top of the garment at the rear of the inside thereof and connected at its opposite ends to the upper portions of the control strips **62** and **63**. This strip may be made in two sections with two or more vertical rows of separable fasteners connecting their adjacent ends for the purpose of adjusting the waist dimension of the garment when it is put on by the wearer.

This type of garment functions in substantially the same way as the garment of FIGURE 1 and the other garments described and illustrated previously. That is to say, the pull which is applied to the opposite ends of the control strips **62** and **63** as, for example, the pull applied to the garters of the lower ends and the support provided by the waist band **28** or the waist region of the garment, supplies lateral resistance to the stretch or pull of the main or body portion of **26***b* of the garment around the thighs and hips, so that the material of panel portion **27***d* is, to a great extent, relieved of such pull. This permits portion **27***d* to expand with the development of the pregnancy even though the material is of the same resistance to extension as the material of the body portion **26***b*.

Throughout the specification it will be understood that the control or tension absorbing strips are separate and distinct from the material of the remainder of the garment. It will be further understood that where the term "two-way stretch" material is used it is not to be construed as implying either equality or inequality of stretch or tension of the several directions of stretch. It also will be understood that the garments shown and described in FIGURES 6 through 21 may, if desired, have their main or body portions, such as **26**, **26***a* and **26***b*, made in sections such as sections **26***x*, **26***y* and **26***z*, as shown in FIGURES 2 and 3.

My invention has been described in connection with a number of different modifications. However, further changes in the arrangement and construction of the garment may be made without departing from the invention and the scope of the invention is, therefore, intended to be set forth in the appended claims.

I claim:

1. In a maternity garment, a body encircling structure extending from the waist to the thighs, said structure including a body portion covering the sides, back and part of the front of the wearer, the front part of the garment including material that is stretchable at least in the horizontal direction, a front abdomen-supporting panel portion of two-way stretch material, such panel portion being symmetrically arranged with respect to the front vertical center line of the garment, and a tension absorber strip separate and distinct from the material of the garment and composed of longitudinally stretchable and laterally relatively non-stretchable material, the strip being secured along its opposite sides to the respective panel and body portions at each side of the panel portion, and serving to divide the panel portion from the body portion, the strip being subjected to lengthwise tension by the pull exerted between the upper and lower portions of the garment when in position on the wearer so that the strip is caused to exert lateral resistance to the pull of the fabric of the body portion thus to reduce the lateral pull of the body portion on the opposite sides of the front panel portion thereby enabling such panel portion to stretch more easily.

2. A maternity garment as set forth in claim 1 wherein the tension absorber strip is of substantially U-shape extending from the region of the top to the region of the bottom of the garment and encloses the front panel portion thereof.

3. A maternity garment as set forth in claim 2 wherein all portions of the U-shaped tension absorber strip are vertically stretchable and horizontally substantially non-stretchable.

4. A maternity garment as set forth in claim 1 wherein the tension absorber strip along each side of the panel portion is extensible to a slight degree in the lateral direction.

5. A maternity garment as set forth in claim 1 wherein the panel portion has less circumferential resistance to extension than the body portion.

6. A maternity garment as set forth in claim 1 wherein the panel portion has substantially the same circumferential resistance to extension as the body portion.

7. In a maternity garment, a body encircling structure extending from the waist to the thighs, said structure including a body portion covering the sides, back and part of the front of the wearer, the front part of the garment including material that is stretchable at least in the horizontal direction, a front abdomen-supporting panel portion of two-way stretch material such panel portion being symmetrically arranged with respect to the front vertical center line of the garment, and two similar tension absorber strips each separate and distinct from the material of the garment and composed of longitudinally stretchable and laterally relatively non-stretchable material, the two strips being disposed one at each side of the panel portion and extending continuously from the region of the top of the garment to the region of the bottom thereof, each of the strips being secured along its opposite sides to the respective panel and body portions at each side of the panel portion, the two strips serving to divide the panel portion from the body portion, the strips being subjected to tension by the pull exerted between the upper and lower portions of the garment when in position on the wearer so that the strips are caused to exert lateral resistance to the pull of the fabric of the body portion thus to reduce the lateral pull of the body portion on the opposite sides of the front panel portion thereby enabling such panel portion to stretch more easily.

8. A maternity garment as set forth in claim 7 wherein the upper terminal portions of the tension absorber strips extend around the opposite sides of the garment and join the top region thereof at the back.

9. A maternity garment as set forth in claim 8 wherein the panel and body portions thereof have substantially the same resistance to extension.

10. A maternity garment as set forth in claim 7 wherein the two strips extend in outwardly sweeping symmetrical curves from the region of the top of the garment to the region of the bottom thereof.

11. A maternity garment as set forth in claim 10 wherein the two tension absorber strips are arranged in substantially straight lines and are disposed closer to each other at the bottom than at the top.

12. A maternity garment as set forth in claim 11 having an additional horizontal tension absorber strip extending between the two side tension absorber strips and spaced from the bottom of the garment, said additional strip being longitudinally stretchable.

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