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SAFETY BELTS FOR INFANTS

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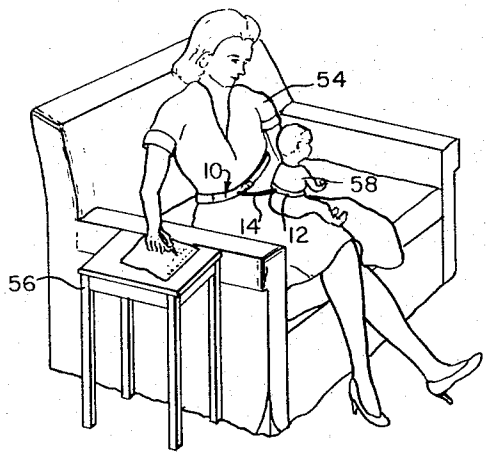


Fig. 1

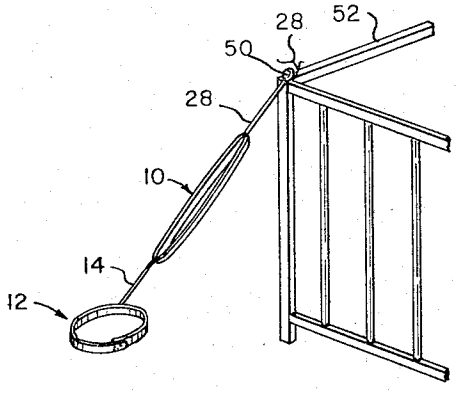


Fig. 3

Fig. 2

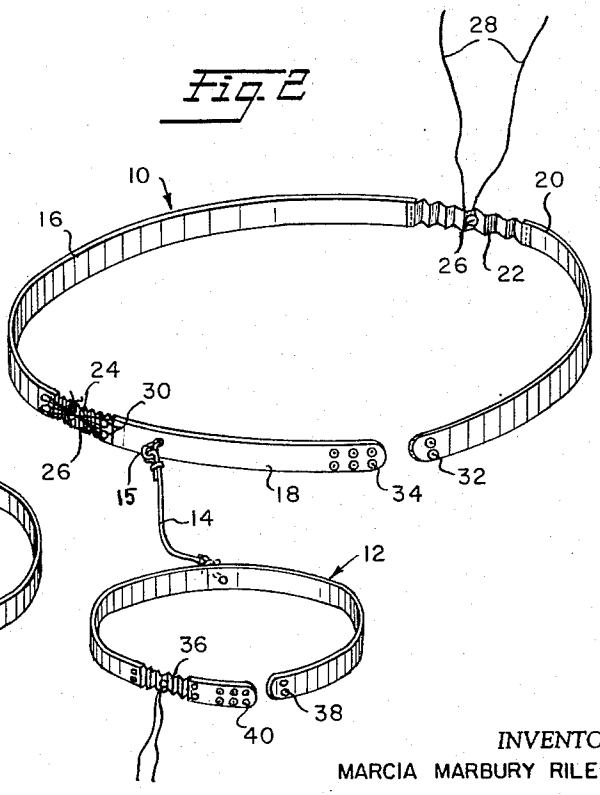
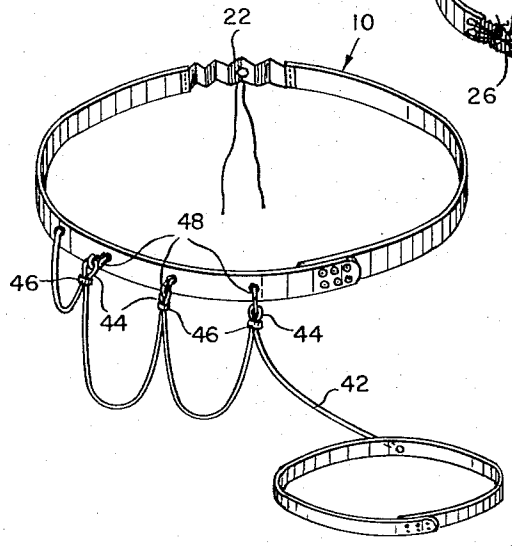


Fig. 4



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SAFETY BELTS FOR INFANTS

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This invention relates to safety devices and more particularly for a safety harness for babies or very young children in the age group commonly known as "toddlers."

Any one who has had the care of babies is well aware of the hazards which are present, particularly after an infant is bathed or during changing of its diaper where momentary inattention on the part of the person tending the child is all that is required for an active baby to suddenly roll over and drop to the floor from the changing platform.

The broad object of the present invention is to provide a safety harness which is particularly adapted to preventing a baby from falling to the floor while the person tending the baby is momentarily distracted and, at the same time, permits that person a degree of freedom of movement whereby both hands may, if necessary, be removed from the child, for example, while the child's attendant reaches into a nearby storage space for whatever is necessary for the infant.

More particularly, it is an object of the invention to provide a device of the foregoing nature comprising generally a first belt which can be worn by the person, say the mother, who is attending the child, and a second belt which is worn by the infant. The two belts are interconnected by yielding flexible means preferably a springy, stretchable material known as shock cord. Where the safety device of the invention is to be used almost exclusively with very small babies, the connection between the belts can be of a fixed relatively short length, which would permit the mother a limited degree of movement while at the same time if the child should drop, the stretchable connecting tether between the belts would be short enough to prevent the child from striking the ground.

On the other hand, where the device might be utilized not only for infants but with toddlers then, in accordance with the invention, the tether between the belts may be arranged so as to be adjustable in length whereby a small child just learning to walk could move a reasonable distance away from its parent without moving so far away that a parent might not be able to run after the child in sufficient time to prevent its stumbling into danger.

Thus, it is not only an object of the invention to provide a safety tether running between parent and child, but also it is an object of the invention to provide a safety device for children who are in the toddling stage with one part of the device either being worn by the parent or, if desired, this part may include means for connecting it to an anchoring device such as a bedstead, post or the like whereby a young child may be restrained while still having considerable freedom of movement within a restricted orbit.

In addition to the foregoing, it is an object of the invention to provide a safety harness of the foregoing nature which may be used as a seat belt for small children riding in automobiles, and also may be used as a connection between a swimming instructor and a small child as a support for the latter, particularly during that period when he is first being introduced to the sensation of being in water without touching bottom or hanging on to a pool side.

Other objects and their attendant advantages will become apparent as the following detailed description is

read in conjunction with the accompanying drawings wherein:

FIG. 1 is a perspective view showing the manner of use of the present invention in tethering a baby to its mother;

FIG. 2 is an enlarged perspective view showing one embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 3 is a reduced perspective view showing the manner in which the invention may be used for tethering a small child to a fixed anchorage point; and

FIG. 4 is a perspective view of the invention showing means whereby the length of the tether between the belts may be adjusted.

Referring now to the drawings and particularly to FIG. 2, it will be seen that the invention comprises a pair of belts **10**, **12** which are interconnected by a flexible tether **14** which may have loops at its ends for engagement with snap hooks **15** carried by the respective belts. The belt **10** is adapted to encircle the waist of an adult whereas the belt **12** is adapted to encircle the waist of a child.

The belt **10** is preferably of composite construction comprising a plurality of flexible, inextensible strap parts, such as the parts **16**, **18**, **20** which are interconnected by expansible pleated sections **22**, **24** of strong, preferably synthetic cloth, having connected centrally thereto a rivet **26** or the like to the outer end of which there is attached a pair of thongs **28** adapted to engage hooks **30** adjacent the ends of the strap parts to adjust the degree of pleating of the cloth sections **22**, **24**. The latter, therefore, provide means for adjusting the size of the belt to adapt it to a wide range of waist sizes and though only two adjusting sections **22**, **24** are illustrated in FIG. 2 it should be understood that as many adjusting sections as may be necessary may be incorporated in the length of the belt.

In addition to the adjusting means just described, the belt is also provided with releasable adjustable fastening means adjacent the ends thereof, these being shown as comprising a pair of male snap fasteners **32** which can be engaged with any two of a plurality of sets of female fastening members **34** on the other end of the belt.

The infant's belt **12** may be substantially identical to the parent's belt **10** though naturally of smaller size. As in the case of the attendant's belt, the infant's belt may be provided with one or more expansible or pleatable sections **36** which are identical to those already described in connection with the parent's belt. As in the case of the parent's belt, the infant's belt is also provided with adjustable fastening means at its opposite ends such as the male and female snap fasteners **38**, **40** shown.

The arrangement shown in FIG. 4 is substantially identical to that shown in FIG. 2 except that the tether member **14** in FIG. 2 is quite short on the order of, say about two feet and is particularly adapted for use with babies. In the embodiment illustrated in FIG. 4 the tether member **42** is similar to the tether **14** of FIG. 2 and is also preferably composed of stretchable material known as shock cord. Rather than being of a fixed, relatively short length, the tether **42** may be adjustable in length by being provided at the end thereof adjacent the parent's belt with a plurality of spaced loops **44** which may be formed by ring clamps **46** squeezed around a plurality of spaced bights in the tether **42** as shown. The belt **10** may be provided with one or more snap hooks **48** for engaging the loops **44**, it being apparent that one or all of the loops may be detached from the snap hooks **48** for determining the effective length of the tether **42**.

FIG. 3 illustrates the use of either of the embodiments of the invention of FIG. 2 or of FIG. 4 for the purpose of tethering a young child to a fixed anchorage. As can be seen, the thongs **28** for the expansible section **22** are substantially opposite the snap hook **15** or other fastener for the tether **14** so that when the belt is closed by engagement of the fastening elements **32**, **34** and the thongs **28** are tied about an anchorage, such as the corner post **50** of a crib or bed **52**, the belt **10** may stretch out into a generally flattened condition and serve substantially as nothing more than an extension between the thongs **28** and the tether member **14**. The belt **12**, when placed about the waist of the very young child prevents him from straying beyond the scope determined by the combined length of the tethering member **14**, the flattened belt **10** and the thongs **28**.

FIG. 1 illustrates the harness of the invention in one of its several uses. As can be seen the mother **54** may be seated in a chair while writing a letter on a side table **56** while her infant **58** is seated safely on her lap without the necessity of her constantly having to hold on to the child to prevent accident by its unexpectedly slipping from her lap on to the floor. As can be seen, the large belt **10** is about the mother's waist and the small belt **12** is about the infant's with the tether **14** between the belts being quite short either because it is initially short as the tether **14** shown in FIG. 2 or it is adjusted so as to be short as in FIG. 4.

Though the safety device of the invention has particular utility in restraining toddlers or preventing accidents from the inadvertent falling of babies from a lap, as shown in FIG. 1, or from a changing or other platform where the parent is attending the immediate needs of the child, the device of the invention may also be used as an infant seat belt in automobiles by attaching the larger belt **10** to the car seat belt or to the attachment in the car for the seat belt to prevent an infant from falling from the seat of a moving vehicle. The device of the invention also has utility in the instruction of young children in swimming where the instructor would wear the large belt and the young pupil the smaller belt which could be used by the instructor to suspend the child in the water while he is getting used to the sensation of floating in water without support. The tether **14** is desirably resilient in nature as would be the case with shock cord so that in the event a child should by accident fall from a changing table, possibly injurious jerking, as would be occasioned by an unyielding tether, is avoided through the resiliency of the shock cord.

Though the expansible means **22**, **24** need not be of the type shown, this arrangement has been found to be particularly effective in affording a comfortable adjusting means which is also capable of an extremely wide range of adjustment so that the larger belt may, for example, efficiently be used throughout the period of pregnancy of a mother who already has one small, relatively helpless child. Where a mother is far along in her pregnancy sudden movement to catch or prevent a small child from falling, could be very injurious to either the mother or to her unborn infant.

Though preferred embodiments of the invention have been shown and described, it will be apparent to those skilled in the art that the invention is susceptible of a variety of changes and modifications without, however, departing from the scope and spirit of the appended claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A safety device for use in the care of children comprising a first belt adapted to encircle the waist of an adult, a second smaller belt adapted to encircle the waist of a child and a flexible tether interconnecting said belts, at least said first belt comprising a plurality of interconnected inextensible flexible strap parts and at least one flexible, expansible part, said expansible part comprising a section of pleatable material connected to and between the adjacent ends of two of said strap parts, and flexible elements cooperating with said strap parts for adjusting the spacing between the ends thereof.

2. The device of claim **1** including fastening means carried intermediate the ends of said pleatable material, hook means on the ends of said strap parts, said flexible elements being connected to said fastening means and cooperating with said hook means to adjust the spacing between the ends of said strap parts.

3. The device of claim **1** including means for adjusting the effective length of the tether between said belts.

4. The device of claim **1** wherein said tether is of resilient material.

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