An expandable shirt collar includes a pair of expandable collar members that are received within corresponding pockets at ends of a collarband. The collar members have fastening means associated therewith to permit closing of the collar.
EXTENDABLE SHIRT COLLAR

TECHNICAL FIELD

[0001] The present invention relates to collar band constructions for articles of clothing, and in particular, to an extendable shirt collar that enables the collar to adjust to different neck sizes and to compensate for shrinkage of the shirt.

BACKGROUND

[0002] Shirts having collars, e.g., dress shirts, are normally sold in sizes based upon the circumference of the collar and the length of the sleeves. Collar sizes typically vary in half inch increments, i.e., 15, 15½, 16, 16½ etc. A purchaser selects a shirt having a neck size nearest to the circumference of his neck, and when he wears the shirt generally fits comfortably. However, the shirt may shrink when it is laundered, resulting in the neck size not being as large as that originally selected. Additionally, the neck size of the person wearing the shirt may vary over a short period of time. Either or both of these circumstances can result in the collar being too tight about the person's neck, making it uncomfortable or even impossible to wear. As a result, when this occurs, the shirt, which may have only been used a few times, is left in a closet and the purchaser has not received the full benefit of the shirt purchase.

[0003] To address these issues, various solutions have been offered in the prior art. For instance, reinforced stitching can be placed in the neckband during manufacture of the shirt, with the stitching extending generally transversely of the length of the neckband, and resembling the stitching around a button hole. If the collar becomes too tight for some reason, the fabric in the area bordered by the stitching can be cut, thereby enabling the neckband to expand slightly, effectively increasing the length of the neckband. The opening formed by cutting the material bordered by the reinforced stitching is disposed wholly within the neckband, and the top and bottom edges of the neckband remain unaffected. Thus, elongation of the neckband is limited due to the restraining effect of the stitching at the top and bottom edges of the neckband. Moreover, in order for the invention shown in this patent to be operative, it is necessary for the user to cut the fabric bordered by the reinforced stitching.

[0004] Other solutions to this problem rely upon some form of elastic material to permit the circumference of the collar to expand to accommodate different neck sizes. However, these solutions provide an elastic material on one side of the collar and therefore, if the elastic material is stretched to permit the collar to be fastened close, there is a lack of proper alignment of the top button due to the elastic material being provided on one side.

[0005] Many of these prior art arrangements are relatively complicated and expensive to manufacture, and/or require specific action or manipulation by the user, and/or apply a constant compressive force to the neck.

[0006] Accordingly, there is need for a simple and economical means associated with the collar of a shirt to enable the size of the collar to automatically expand to compensate for shrinkage of the shirt and/or an increase in the neck size of the user.

SUMMARY

[0007] In one embodiment, a shirt with an expandable collar is formed of a shirt body; an elongated neckband; and a collar. The neckband is adapted to encircle a neck of a wearer and has upper and lower edges connected to the collar and to the shirt body, respectively. The neckband also has a first end and an opposing second end.

[0008] A first pocket is defined between the neckband and the shirt body at the first end of the neckband and a second pocket is defined between the neckband and the shirt body at the second end of the neckband. The first and second pockets are open.

[0009] The shirt also includes a first expandable elongated collar member that is at least partially disposed within the first pocket and includes a first part that is formed of an elastic material and is attached to at least one of the neckband and the shirt body and a second part that is attached to the first elastic part and is formed of a substantially non-elastic material. The second part passes through the opening of the first pocket and includes a first fastening means at a free end thereof.

[0010] The shirt also includes a second expandable elongated collar member that is at least partially disposed within the second pocket and includes a first part that is formed of an elastic material and is attached to at least one of the neckband and the shirt body and a second part that is attached to the first elastic part and is formed of a substantially non-elastic material. The second part passes through the opening of the second pocket and includes a second fastening means at a free end thereof. The first and second fastening means are complementary to one another for securing the neckband and thus the collar about the neck of the wearer.

[0011] These and other aspects, features and advantages shall be apparent from the accompanying Drawings and description of certain embodiments of the invention.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0012] FIG. 1 is a front perspective view of a shirt with an expandable collar assembly in accordance with the present invention being shown in a closed position;

[0013] FIG. 2 is a front perspective view of the shirt with the expandable collar assembly in an open position; and

[0014] FIG. 3 is a front perspective view of the shirt with the expandable collar assembly in the open position and a collar band partially removed to show the inner parts of the assembly.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF CERTAIN EMBODIMENTS OF THE INVENTION

[0015] In accordance with the present invention, a shirt 100 is shown. The shirt 100 has a collar assembly 110; a neckband 120 that is sewn to the body of the shirt; and a collar 130 that is sewn to the neckband 120.

[0016] The collar assembly 110 is thus secured to the neckband 120. The collar assembly 110 can have a variety of shapes and styles. In the illustrated embodiment, the collar 130 is a pointed collar and is illustrated as secured to a neckband 120 (collar stand) having a placket front 135, although French fronts may also be used in practicing this invention. The neckband 120 is in turn secured to the shirt body as noted below.

[0017] The collar assembly 110 can be made in a wide range of styles and using a wide range of collar fabrication techniques. Typically, the collar assembly 110 is secured to a collar band or neckband 120. The collar assembly 110 can be formed with an outer ply 200 and an integrally formed and fold over inner ply 210 (FIGS. 1 and 2). Conventionally, an
interfacing or stiffener (not shown) may be interposed between the inner and outer ply 210, 200 to give body to the collar assembly 110. Additionally, an inner self fabric can also be stitched to the inner ply 210 with the inner self fabric cut along a bias at one end of the collar. Parallel stitching extending from a collar point 111 securing the inner self fabric and inner ply together forms an elongated pocket 113 shaped to receive a collar stay (not shown). A similar construction may be provided at each collar point 111. The neckband 120 can be secured to a band of the shirt body at its neck opening with a border 125 secured by parallel lines of stitching 127, 129, extending through the neckband and the shirt body. These bands of stitching, 127, 129, define a pocket 175 between the neckband 120 and shirt body. As described below, this pocket 175 contains an extendable collar member.

A slot 185 is positioned in the pocket 175 defined by the neckband 120 and shirt body and allows access to the inside of the pocket 175. As shown in the figures, a distal end (edge 187) of the neckband 120 does not extend to the placket front 135 but instead there is a space between the distal end (edge 187) and an inner exposed edge of the placket front 135. Since the neckband 120 and the shirt body are typically formed of the same material, the look of the front of the shirt is uniform and the slot 185 is not readily apparent.

It will be appreciated that there are thus two pockets 175 formed with one pocket 175 formed at one end of the collarband 120 and the other pocket 175 formed at the other end of the collarband 120. For simplicity, one pocket 175 is referred to as the left pocket, while the other pocket 175 is referred to as the right pocket.

As mentioned herein, within the left pocket 175, a first expandable collar member 300 is disposed and similarly, within the right pocket 175, a second expandable collar member 310 is disposed. The first expandable collar member 300 includes a first elongated strip 302 formed of elastic material. The first expandable collar member 300 is sized and shaped to be disposed within the left pocket 175. The first elongated strip 302 has a first end (not shown) and an opposing second end 304. The first end of the strip 302 is secured to at least one portion of the shirt (i.e., either the neckband or shirt body). For example, the first end of the strip 302 can be securely attached to the shirt body and/or to the collarband 120. The first elongated strip 302 is formed of any number of different elastic fabric materials, including synthetic materials, natural materials and/or a combination thereof. For example, suitable elastic materials including but are not limited to rubber, polyester, etc.

Any number of different elastic materials can be used. In one embodiment, the elastic material used to form the elongated strip 302 is made of a combination of materials (e.g., a mixture of 64% polyester; 19% elastic (e.g., rubber thread); and 17% viscose). However, other elastic materials are equally possible.

The strip 302 can be securely attached to the shirt using conventional means, including but not limited to using stitches, as shown.

The first expandable collar member 300 also includes a first collar tab 305 that is fixedly attached to the first elongated strip 302. For example, the first collar tab 305 includes a first end 306 and an opposing second end 307. The first end 306 of the first collar tab 305 is fixedly attached to the free second end 304 of the strip 302 using conventional means, such as stitching, as shown. The second end 307 is a free end of the first collar tab 305.

The first collar tab 305 includes a button hole 150 that is formed therethrough. As shown, the button hole 150 can extend proximate to the second end 307.

In contrast to the material characteristics of the first elongated strip 302, the first collar tab 305 is not formed of a substantially elastic material but instead, the first collar tab 305 can be formed of a generally or substantially elastic material, such as a fabric. In one embodiment, as shown, the first collar tab 305 is formed of the same material as both the neckband 120 and the shirt body. Thus, the first collar tab 305 can be formed of a fabric that is formed at least substantially of cotton.

In one embodiment (the illustrated embodiment), the length of the first elongated strip 302 is shorter than the length of the first collar tab 305. For example, the first collar tab 305 can have a length that is at least 2 times greater than the first elongated strip 302; or 2½ times greater than the first elongated strip 302; or at least 3 times greater than the first elongated strip 302. For example, the first elongated strip 302 can have a length of about ¼ inch to about 1 inch and the first collar tab 305 can have a length of about 3-4 ½ inch.

The second expandable collar member 310 has a similar construction to the first expandable collar member 300. The second expandable collar member 310 includes a second elongated strip 312 formed of elastic material. The second expandable collar member 310 is sized and shaped to be disposed within the right pocket 175. The second elongated strip 312 has a first end and an opposing second end 314. The first end of the strip 312 is securely coupled to at least one portion of the shirt. For example, the first end of the strip 312 can be securely attached to the shirt body and/or to the collarband 120. The second elongated strip 312 is formed of any number of different elastic fabric materials, including synthetic materials, natural materials and/or a combination thereof. For example, suitable elastic materials including but are not limited to rubber, polyester, etc.

The strip 312 can be securely attached to the shirt using conventional means, including but not limited to using stitches, as shown.

The second expandable collar member 310 also includes a second collar tab 315 that is fixedly attached to the second elongated strip 312. For example, the second collar tab 315 includes a first end 316 and an opposing second end 317. The first end 316 of the second collar tab 315 is fixedly attached to the free second end 314 of the strip 312 using conventional means, such as stitching, as shown. The second end 317 is a free end of the second collar tab 315.

The second collar tab 315 includes a collar button 140 that is formed therethrough. As shown, the collar button 140 can extend proximate to the second end 317.

It will be appreciated that each of the first and second expandable collar members 300, 310 is constructed to be stretched along its length so as to increase the length thereof. The collarband 120 that overlies the shirt body limits the range of movement of the expandable collar members 300, 310 since the collarband 120 overlies the collar members 300, 310. However, the slot 185 at the end of the pocket 175 not only represents the expandable collar member 300, 310 but it also permits these members to be further elongated (stretched) due to the elastic nature thereof.

As shown in FIG. 2, in one embodiment, the first expandable collar member 300 is formed and has a length such that in its rest position (non-expanded), the free second end 307 of the first collar tab 305 is in close proximity to the
What is claimed is:

1. A shirt comprising:
   a shirt body;
   an elongated neckband;
   a collar;
   wherein the neckband is adapted to encircle a neck of a wearer and has upper and lower edges connected to the collar and to the shirt body, respectively, and a first end and an opposing second end;

   wherein a first pocket is defined between the neckband and the shirt body at the first end of the neckband and a second pocket is defined between the neckband and the shirt body at the second end of the neckband, the first and second pockets being open;

   a first expandable elongated collar member that is at least partially disposed within the first pocket and includes a first part that is formed of an elastic material and is attached to at least one of the neckband and the shirt body and a second part that is attached to the first elastic part and is formed of a substantially non-elastic material, the second part passing through the opening of the first pocket and includes a first fastening means at a free end thereof;

   a second expandable elongated collar member that is at least partially disposed within the second pocket and includes a first part that is formed of an elastic material and is attached to at least one of the neckband and the shirt body and a second part that is attached to the first elastic part and is formed of a substantially non-elastic material, the second part passing through the opening of the second pocket and includes a second fastening means at a free end thereof, the first and second fastening means being complementary to one another for securing the neckband and thus the collar about the neck of the wearer.

2. The shirt of claim 1, wherein the second part is formed of the same material as the shirt body and neckband.

3. The shirt of claim 1, wherein first part of each of the first and second collar members comprises an elongated strip of elastic material.

4. The shirt of claim 1, wherein each of the first and second collar members is extendable to an extended position, wherein when the first and second collar members are in the extended positions, the first parts thereof remain covered by the neckband with only the second parts thereof extending beyond the ends of the neckband and visible.

5. The shirt of claim 4, wherein a necksize of the collar increases at least one inch when the first and second collar members assume the extended positions.

6. The shirt of claim 4, wherein greater than 50% of the second part, as measured along its length, is disposed outside of the respective pocket in the extended position.

7. The shirt of claim 1, wherein in a rest position of the first and second collar members, at least a portion of each of the second parts of the first and second collar members is disposed within the first and second pockets, respectively.

8. The shirt of claim 7, wherein at least 50% of the second part, as measured along its length, is disposed within the respective pocket in the rest position.

9. The shirt of claim 1, wherein each of the first and second fastening means comprises one of a button and a button hole.

10. The shirt of claim 1, wherein the second parts of the first and second collar members are formed of a substantially inelastic fabric.
11. The shirt of claim 1, wherein each of the first and second parts has a length that is at least 3 times a length of the corresponding first elastic parts of the associated collar members.

12. The shirt of claim 1, wherein the first and second collar members are mirror images of one another.

13. The shirt of claim 1, wherein the shirt includes a first front placket and a second front placket, the first front placket including having a plurality of aligned buttons and the second front placket having a plurality of aligned button holes for receiving the buttons.

14. The shirt of claim 13, wherein in the closed position, the first and second fastening means are aligned with the buttons of the first front placket when the buttons are received within the button holes of the second front placket.

15. A shirt comprising:

a) a shirt body including first and second front plackets, the first front placket having a plurality of buttons, the second front placket having a plurality of button holes that are adapted to receive the buttons;

b) an elongated neckband;

c) a collar,

wherein the neckband is adapted to encircle a neck of a wearer and has upper and lower edges connected to the collar and to the shirt body, respectively, at a first end and an opposing second end;

wherein a first pocket is defined between the neckband and the shirt body at the first end of the neckband and a second pocket is defined between the neckband and the shirt body at the second end of the neckband, the first and second pockets being open, the first pocket being spaced from an inner edge of the first front placket, the second pocket being spaced from an inner edge of the second front placket;

a first expandable elongated collar member that is at least partially disposed within the first pocket and includes a first part that is formed of an elastic material and is attached to at least one of the neckband and the shirt body and a second part that is attached to the first elastic part and is formed of a substantially non-elastic material, the second part passing through the opening of the first pocket and includes a first fastening means at a free end thereof; and

a second expandable elongated collar member that is at least partially disposed within the second pocket and includes a first part that is formed of an elastic material and is attached to at least one of the neckband and the shirt body and a second part that is attached to the first elastic part and is formed of a substantially non-elastic material, the second part passing through the opening of the second pocket and includes a first fastening means at a free end thereof, the first and second fastening means being complementary to one another for securing the neckband and thus the collar about the neck of the wearer;

wherein the second parts of the first and second elongated collar members are formed of the same material as the shirt body and neckband.

16. A shirt comprising:

a shirt body including first and second front plackets, the first front placket having a plurality of buttons, the second front placket having a plurality of button holes that are adapted to receive the buttons;

an elongated neckband;

collar,

wherein the neckband is adapted to encircle a neck of a wearer and has upper and lower edges connected to the collar and to the shirt body, respectively, at a first end and an opposing second end;

wherein a left pocket is defined between the neckband and the shirt body at the first end of the neckband and a right pocket is defined between the neckband and the shirt body at the second end of the neckband, the left and right pockets being open, the left pocket being spaced from an inner edge of the left front placket, the right pocket being spaced from an inner edge of the right front placket;

a first expandable elongated collar member that is at least partially disposed within the left pocket and includes a first part that is formed of an elastic material and is attached to at least one of the neckband and the shirt body and a second part that is attached to the first elastic part and is formed of a substantially non-elastic material, the second part passing through the opening of the left pocket and includes a button hole at a free end thereof; and

a second expandable elongated collar member that is at least partially disposed within the right pocket and includes a first part that is formed of an elastic material and is attached to at least one of the neckband and the shirt body and a second part that is attached to the first elastic part and is formed of a substantially non-elastic material, the second part passing through the opening of the right pocket and includes a button at a free end thereof, the button and button hole for securing the neckband and thus the collar about the neck of the wearer;

wherein the second parts of the first and second elongated collar members have the same appearance as the shirt body and neckband.

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