A garment set of a nursing bra and a shirt. The nursing bra includes a main body portion and at least one first strap. The main body portion includes at least one cutout designed so as to receive a woman's nipple when the nursing bra is worn. The strap includes a first hook. The shirt includes a main body portion and at least one second strap. The strap includes a second hook. The first and second hooks are designed so as to be selectively detachable from one another.
NURSING BRA WITH DETACHABLE T-SHIRT

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The present invention relates to garments worn by nursing women and, more particularly, to a nursing bra which has a T-shirt detachably connectable thereto.

[0002] Nursing bras and other garments worn by nursing women are known in the art. For example, as described in U.S. Pat. No. 6,855,029, the entirety of which is hereby incorporated by reference, there is shown a single garment which combines the functionality of both a T-shirt and a nursing bra. Referring to FIGS. 1A and 1B, as described in U.S. Pat. No. 6,855,029, a front view of the nursing garment 10 includes external nursing flaps 3, which fasten via a fastener 4 to shoulder straps 5. External nursing flap 3 includes a soft cup breast support 2, an inner fastener 1 and an internal nursing flap 8A. When the external nursing flap 3 and internal nursing flap 8A are closed, the inner fastener 1 couples with the outer fastener 4. An internal elastic chest band 15 is positioned just below the soft cup breast support 2.

[0003] Nursing garment 10 includes a built in nursing bra that is partly internal and partly external. A nursing bra is formed by a soft cup frame 2 attached to an elastic chest band 15 and attached via short straps at the top to the front of the shoulder straps 5. In the back, the elastic chest band 15 is attached to an internal back piece of fabric 8B on the inside of the tank top 10. The internal back piece of fabric 8B extends upward from the elastic chest band 15 to the shoulder straps 5 at the back. The shoulder straps 5 include an adjustable section 9 shown in schematic form. Adjustment devices 7, 14 are provided for adjusting the length of one section 9 of the shoulder strap 5.

[0004] Internal nursing flaps 8A are attached to the bottom of the soft cup frame 2. When closed, the internal nursing flaps 8A directly cover the breasts and are attached to the shoulder straps 5 at the top of the soft cup frame 2. The internal nursing flap 8A may include a provision for placement of a nursing pad 6. External nursing flaps 3 are attached to the internal nursing flaps 8A at the top of both nursing flaps, where a fastener 4 is located. Both internal and external nursing flaps 8A, 3 cover the breasts when fastener 4 is coupled to the shoulder straps 5 by fastener 1 at the top of the soft cup frame 2. The outer portion of the nursing garment includes a stretch body wrap 10A, 10B extending upward from the torso and forming the external nursing flaps 3 which are attached to the internal nursing flaps 8A and to the shoulder straps 5 to give a smooth single garment appearance. The front 10A and back 10B (i.e., the body wrap portion) of the nursing garment 10 is made of an elastic, stretchable fabric so as to form fit around the torso of the wearer.

[0005] The nursing garment 10 has a built in invisible nursing bra formed by internal sections comprising the elastic chest band 15, the soft cup frame 2, the internal nursing flaps 8A, and the back piece of fabric 8B. The shoulder straps 5 including the adjustable section 9 form the external portion of the invisible nursing bra. Externally, the shoulder straps 5 appear to be part of the tank top/undershirt and do not appear to be a part of a nursing bra.

[0006] In use, the wearer adjusts the length 9 of the straps 5 of garment 10 for snug fit. The internal and external nursing flaps 8A, 3 cover the soft frame 2 when the fasteners 1, 4 are closed. The internal fabric flaps 8A can also have a pocket made of netting or of the same fabric material as the tank top to hold a nursing pad 6 in place. Fasteners 1 and 4 may be snaps, clasps or a hook and loop type fastener, in order to hold the internal and external fabric flaps 8A, 3, which cover the breasts and the soft cup frame 2. To nurse a baby, fasteners 1 and 4 are separated, and both internal and external nursing flaps 8A, 3 fold downward to access the breast. After feeding, the internal and external nursing flaps 8A, 3 are re-attached to the shoulder straps 5 by fasteners 1 and 4.

[0007] A problem with the above-described prior art nursing garment is that the T-shirt and nursing bra are part of a single unitary garment. As such, it is difficult and/or complex for a woman to put on the garment. Moreover, one part of the garment can wear more quickly than the other and the forced combination of the two pieces does not allow a woman flexibility in choosing what T-shirt to wear with a corresponding bra.

[0008] Therefore, there is a need in the art for a garment which includes the benefits of a combination of a shirt and nursing bra but which also provides flexibility and enables separation of the shirt from the nursing bra.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0009] One aspect of the invention is a combination of separately provided nursing bra and shirt garment set. The combination comprises a nursing bra, the nursing bra including a main body portion and a pair of straps, the main body portion including left and right cutouts designed so as to receive a woman's nipples when the nursing bra is worn, each strap including a first hook.

[0010] The shirt includes a main body portion and several second straps, the straps including respective second hooks; wherein the first and second hooks are designed so as to be selectively connectable and detachable from one another in course of the normal donning and removing the bra and the shirt garment set.

[0011] Other features and advantages of the present invention will become apparent from the following description of the invention that refers to the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0012] FIG. 1A is a perspective view of a combination nursing bra and T-shirt in accordance with the prior art.

[0013] FIG. 1B is a side cut-away view of the prior art garment shown in FIG. 1A.

[0014] FIG. 2 is a front view of a nursing bra in accordance with an embodiment of the invention.

[0015] FIG. 3 is a front view of a nursing shirt in accordance with an embodiment of the invention.

[0016] FIG. 4 is a cross-sectional view of a portion of the nursing shirt shown in FIG. 3 in accordance with an embodiment of the invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

[0017] Referring to FIG. 2, there is shown a nursing bra 50 in accordance with the embodiment of the invention. nurs-
ing bra 50 includes a main body portion 52 integral with two strap members 54. Nursing bra 50 is designed to cover the chest of a woman. To maintain its orientation when worn, an optional waist band 56, preferably resilient, may be included at the bottom of nursing bra 50.

[0018] Main body portion 52 includes cutouts 62 designed so as to expose enough of a woman’s nipple and the surrounding area, to enable a baby to nurse without removing the bra. Straps 54 each include an adjustable clasp 58. Clasp 58 may be used to adjust the length of strap 54 so that nursing bra 50 may be adjusted to fit snugly on a woman. Straps 54 further include a hook member 60. Although only a front of nursing bra 50 is shown, the back of nursing bra 50 may be virtually the same, except for the cutouts 62.

[0019] Hook members 60 are disposed on both the front and back of nursing bra 50. Hook member 60 is designed so as to receive and mate with another hook member 64 on a shirt as discussed below. Alternatively, conventional closing clasps (not shown) may be provided at the back of the bra to attach the right and left rear sections, in the widely and well known and used fashion.

[0020] Referring now also to FIG. 3, there is shown a nursing shirt 66, e.g. a T-shirt, in accordance with an embodiment of the invention. Nursing T-shirt 66 includes a main body portion 68, with front and rear strap members 70. Each strap member 70 includes, at a distal end, a hook portion 64. As referenced above, hook portion 64 is designed to mate and lock with a corresponding hook portion 60 on nursing bra 50. Four hook portion 64 are provided, to enable respective connections to the four hook members 60 of the bra.

[0021] Referring now to FIG. 4, nursing T-shirt 66 may further optionally include pockets 76 placed internally on a main body portion 68. Pockets 76 have an opening 72 with a cross-sectional area that is preferably larger than the cross-sectional area of opening 62 in nursing bra 50. Pockets 76 are shaped to hold replaceable absorption pads 74, which are preferably made of a soft and absorbent material as they rest against the skin and nipples of the wearer.

[0022] In this way, a woman desiring to wear a nursing bra and T-shirt, may first put on nursing bra 50 and then choose from one of a plurality of nursing T-shirts 66, which may be provided in many different colors, materials, designs and decorations. Nursing T-shirt 66 may be attached to nursing bra 50 through engagement of hook members 64 with hook members 60. Although hooks are shown, any type of connecting device such as clasps, zippers, snaps, buttons, Velcro, etc., could be used. A nursing pad 74 may be placed in pocket 76 and, as the cross-sectional area of opening 72 may be larger than the cross-sectional area of opening 62, a woman’s nipple will pass through opening 62 and then be cushioned and protected by the nursing pads 74. In addition, any discharge from the woman’s nipple may be absorbed by pad 74.

[0023] When the woman desires to nurse, the woman may simply unhook any one of the front hook members 64 from a corresponding member 60, thereby exposing the woman’s nipple. Only one side of T-shirt 66 needs to be opened in order for the woman to nurse. Preferably, the material and the color of T-shirt 66 and nursing bra 50 are made of the same material. In this way, when T-shirt 66 is worn on nursing bra 50 it will appear as though the woman is wearing a single garment.

[0024] As shown in the dotted lines at FIG. 3, the rear straps 70a may be provided in a length and width so that their hooks 64a can engage corresponding front hooks on the bra, located at or very near the hooks 60. If the widths of straps 70a are wide enough, they can control and conceal the bra straps 54.

[0025] Thus, by providing a means for selectively detaching a nursing T-shirt from a nursing bra, an improved nursing garment is realized.

[0026] Although the present invention has been described in relation to its use as a nursing bra, it should also be appreciated that the use of the garment set is not so limited. For example, some women prefer to present a look whereby a silhouette of the their breast nipples is visible through their T-shirts. For these women, the garment set of the present invention provides the additional benefit of the breasts being supported by the bra while the nipples are not covered by the bra providing that look and fashion appearance without the disadvantage of dressing in a fashion that does not include breast support. The cutout bra of the present invention enables its use with a large variety of different outer shirts, or T-shirts made of differently colored materials and materials of different transparency characteristics to suit the dressing tastes of a large variety of consumers.

[0027] Although the present invention has been described in relation to particular embodiments thereof, many other variations and modifications and other uses will become apparent to those skilled in the art. It is preferred, therefore, that the present invention not be limited by the specific disclosure herein.

What is claimed is:

1. A garment set including a nursing bra and a shirt, the garment set comprising:
   - a nursing bra, the nursing bra including a main body portion and a plurality of straps, the main body portion including first and second cutouts designed to expose a woman’s nipples when the nursing bra is worn, the straps including first mating members and;
   - a shirt including a main body portion, an open top side, and second mating members at the top side;
   wherein the first and second mating members are designed so as to be selectively attachable and detachable from one another, in a manner that readily enables combining different shirts with different bras.

2. The garment set as recited in claim 1, wherein the shirt further includes pockets, each of which is designed to receive a respective, removable nursing pad.

3. The garment set as recited in claim 2, wherein:
   - each pocket includes a cutout having a cross-sectional area larger than the cutouts of the bra.

4. The garment set as recited in claim 1, wherein the bra further includes a chest band.

5. The garment set as recited in claim 1, wherein the shirt is a T-shirt with four straps extending from the open side and the second mating members extend from the straps of the T-shirt.

6. The garment set as recited in claim 1, wherein the mating members are selected from a fastener group consisting of: hooks, snaps, clasps, buttons, zippers and velcro.
7. The garment set of claim 5, including front and rear straps, the rear straps being sufficiently long to connect to corresponding ones of the first mating members located at a front portion of the bra straps.

8. A nursing bra designed to be part of a garment set including the nursing bra and a shirt, the nursing bra comprising:

a main body portion and a plurality of straps, the main body portion including first and second cutouts designed so as to leave exposed a woman's nipples when the nursing bra is worn, the straps including first mating members;

wherein the nursing bra has its first mating members located on a front portion of the straps, whereby a shirt that includes a main body portion, an open top side, and a second mating members at the top side, can be operatively attached to the nursing bra by having the second mating members on the shirt selectively attached or detached to and from the nursing bra.

9. A shirt especially designed to be part of a garment set that also includes a nursing bra, the shirt comprising:

a main body portion of the shirt with an open top side and mating members at the top side of the shirt;

wherein the mating members of the top side of shirt are so designed and located as to enable rapid attaching and disattaching of the shirt to a nursing bra which includes a main body portion and a plurality of straps with the main body portion of the bra including first and second cutouts designed so as to leave exposed a woman's nipples exposed when the nursing bra is worn, and with respective bra mating members on the straps of the bra, so located as to enable the mating members of the bra and of the shirt to be rapidly attached and disattached from one another.

10. A method for dressing a nursing woman, the method comprising:

placing a nursing bra on the woman, the nursing bra including a main body portion, at least one cutout designed so as to receive a woman's nipple, and at least one first strap, the first strap including a first mating member;

placing a shirt over the nursing bra, the shirt including at least one second strap, the second strap including a second mating member, and

connecting the first mating member to the second mating member.

11. The method as recited in claim 10, wherein the connecting is performed through the engagement of corresponding hooks.

12. The method as recited in claim 10, further comprising disconnecting the first strap from the second strap whereby the shirt remains disposed over the nursing bra and the nipple is exposed.

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