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THE SELECTION OF CLOTHING FOR CHILDREN

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The Selection of Clothing for Children

Because the future usefulness of any citizen is so dependent upon the good health and the habits founded in childhood, it is extremely essential that the clothing of children should be carefully selected from a hygienic and ethical as well as an economic and artistic standpoint.

HYGIENIC SELECTION.

Unrestricted Body. In order that growth may be natural and sturdy, the organs of circulation and digestion must be unhampered and the nervous system free from irritation and strain. There should be perfect freedom and the clothes so comfortable that the wearer is unconscious of them.

Union Garments supported from the shoulders are preferable to two garments which may gap or sag at the waist line or overlap and give an uneven covering to the body. Waist

bands which are too snug, restrict the circulation and retard the work of the digestive organs. Elastic in the bands of either skirts or blouses, if at all snug, prevents the deep abdominal breathing, restricts the circulation and, if worn continuously, is apt to result in displaced organs and a deformed thorax.

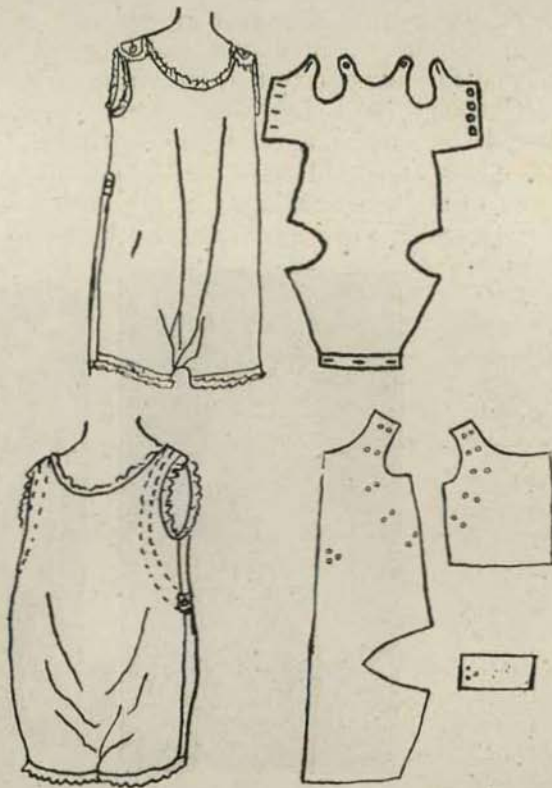


Union Suits which have the garter attachment at the side.

Sleeves should be loose and well fitted to permit of active exercise without thought of rips or rents. The set-in sleeve, properly fitted, the raglan sleeve, or the kimona sleeve which is well rounded under the arm, are equally comfortable. The kimona sleeve which is not well shaped can cause much discomfort and a great deal of mending, because of the resulting tears.

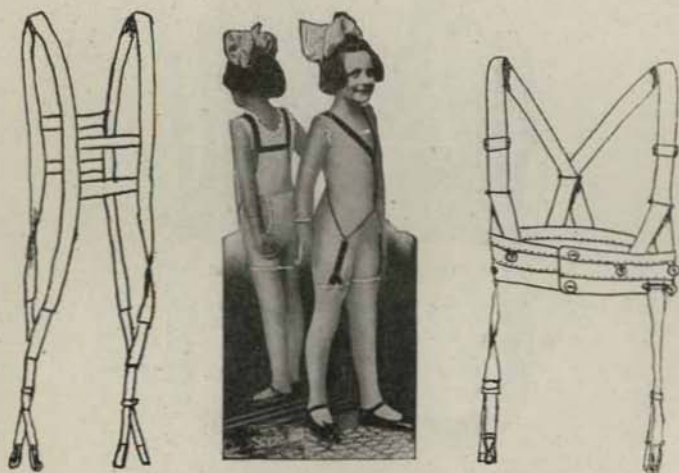
Neck bands should be soft and loose. Serious nervous disorders may be caused by binding neckbands.

Greatest care should be taken that the crotch of little panties, bloomers and trousers is plenty deep. A garment too short in the crotch causes annoyance and irritation which may result in habits which eventually undermine the health of the entire body.



Two equally attractive little combination suits. One, having no under arm seam, conserves a little energy; the other can be cut a little more advantageously and conserves material.

Hose Supporters should be carefully selected. Never use band garters as those tight enough to hold up the stockings will restrict circulation. Those fastened at the front of waists are equally detrimental. Stockings should be held up at the side with one clasp toward the front of the hose and one toward the back, with the support coming directly over the shoulder with equal strain front and back. The shoulder hose supporter or the type which fastens to the side of a waist having a shoulder band are equally good. This relieves all strain at the waist line, holds the stocking up well, and will not cause stooped shoulders by a frontal strain. When the clasps are still good but the elastic is worn out, new elastic should replace the old for there is no merit in a supporter which has no elasticity.



Types of hose supporters which place the strain upon the shoulders.

Shoes for children should be given the closest attention. The comfort and well being of the entire body is very dependent upon the fit of one's shoes. Train growing feet so as to insure sound, shapely, unblemished feet in maturity. Do your child's feet have to fit his shoes or do his shoes fit his feet? Children's shoes should have substantial soles, as straight on the inside as possible and should fit the heel and instep snugly, and leave the toes free. Properly fitting shoes wear longer than those poorly fitted and also encourage habits of correct standing and walking.



Conservation of Body Heat. The maintenance of a constant body temperature is more important in childhood than in adult life, as children require more reserve energy for growth. It is therefore essential that clothing should be selected which will conserve this energy by non-conduction. No fiber possesses warmth as an innate property, but fibers which hold still air are poor conductors of heat and consequently feel warm.

A porous material of any fiber feels and is warmer than the plain material of the same fiber. Therefore, the weave is

the consideration of greatest importance in the selection of garments to be worn next the skin. An open weave holds a large amount of air in its meshes and provides ventilation. A garment of this nature, light in weight, next the skin with an outer garment of closer weave, to prevent too free passage of air to the body, proves the most satisfactory method of properly regulating the body temperature. Consequently, we select the knitted union suit for winter and the porous woven material for summer.

Absorption of Excretions. The surface of the body should be kept dry and clean. Perspiration and oily substances excreted by the body should be absorbed and evaporated as rapidly as excreted. A soft loose weave absorbs moisture more readily than a firm one and is easily cleansed. However, in the matter of absorption the fibers play a more important part.

Wool absorbs moisture and oil very readily, but it does not permit rapid evaporation, so often gives a feeling of dampness and chill to the skin and the air pores of the garment become so clogged as to prevent ventilation. Wool is also difficult to cleanse thoroughly and as it felts in shrinking the air space between meshes is greatly lessened.

Silk is a poor conductor of heat and readily absorbs but does not long retain moisture and in a soft flexible weave is ideal for underwear. Its price, however, prohibits its general use.

Cotton is now being woven and knitted into materials which are almost as warm as wool and these can be easily cleansed and sterilized without danger of stiffening or shrinking.

Linen absorbs and gives up moisture more readily than any other textile fiber so feels very cool and because of its smooth, glossy surface is easily laundered. It, therefore, is the most ideal for summer underwear and, if combined with wool, makes a splendid winter garment since it aids in the evaporation while the wool holds in the body heat.

The local climatic conditions will determine to a large extent the weight and warmth required in clothing, but the above principles hold good for every locality and should always be carefully considered.

Amount of Clothing. Children are too often overburdened with clothing. They should wear as few clothes as possible to be practical. In summer the clothing should be loose and light weight, permitting abundant ventilation. In

winter the little muslin, gingham or sateen garments should cover the knit undergarment, both for the warmth secured by the still air held between the double thickness previously mentioned, and because the smooth finished material soils less easily than the soft finished garment and is consequently more hygienic. Wherever possible warmth should be obtained by the underwear, and cotton rompers, dresses or little suits should be worn, but if wool is used for this purpose, the styles should be simple enough to be easily laundered. The weather each day should determine the amount of clothing worn and it should be adjusted with a change in temperature. Half hose should only be worn when it is warm enough so that the child would be perfectly comfortable if it were barefooted.

The outer garments should be of a firm, close weave to keep out the cold air and wind and also to easily shed dust and dirt. Greater protection will be secured by two lighter weight garments than by one heavy coat. A sweater and coat are quite ideal because of the layer of still air held between the two and in the meshes of the sweater.

Provision should be made for the stormy days. A good pair of *rubbers* are an essential part of every child's wardrobe and in a region where there is an abundant snowfall, the high *overshoes* and tight *leggings* are of fundamental importance.

A *storm coat or cape* and a *rain hat* should be provided not only for the sake of the child's physical well being, but from the standpoint of economy. They are a wise investment because the other clothing, thus protected from bad weather, will give much longer service. A cape may be more advantageous than a coat for a little girl because it is not so quickly outgrown. Adults' rain coats which have been discarded because of rents or possible wear in certain places may often be recut into splendid cuts for children. A flat lapped seam carefully stitched with a fine needle will usually be satisfactory, but further protection may be procured by adhesive or vulcanizing tape.

ECONOMIC SELECTION.

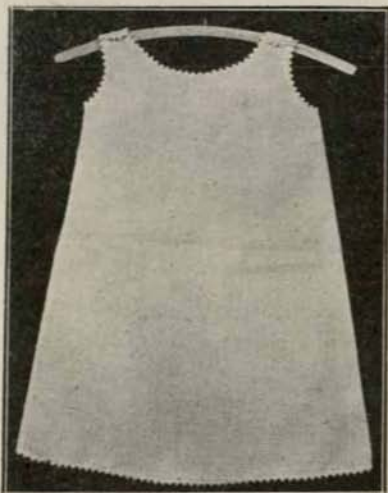
The quality of fiber, weave and dye, their suitability and the cost of laundering in either time or energy, will determine the economic value of children's clothing.

Fiber. The fiber must be strong and durable for the frequent washing as well as the hard usage given in play is especially wearing. The strength of fiber may be determined, to a certain extent, by the examination of both warp and woof ravelings or by the use of the following test: Grasp the material between the thumb and first finger of each hand with the tips of the thumbs touching, draw the fingers away from each other and the backs of the thumbs together until the knuckles touch, then force the thumb tips apart. A great deal of strength is procured in this manner and if material will bear this strain upon the woof threads it can usually be depended upon to give very good service as the woof is generally the weaker of the two threads.

Weave. A weave which pulls at the seams or catches and pulls in rough play is not suitable for a child's garment. Those most satisfactory for children's wear are the plain, close twills and sateen weaves. In close relationship with the weave is the filling-in material. Cotton or linen material that is not closely woven is often given the appearance of firmness by oversizing or loading with starch or other substances. Scratch the material with the finger nail or rub briskly, then hold up to the light. An excess of loading can usually be readily noticed by the difference in the closeness of the threads in the rubbed and unrubbed portions.

Color. Fast dyes are especially desirable in children's clothing because of their need of hard and frequent washing and their constant exposure to strong sunlight, for children should have plenty of fresh air and sunshine. A material dyed in the yarn is much more apt to be fast than one dyed in the piece or printed. This may be determined by examination of an untwisted raveling. Yarn dyed ravelings will be uniform in color. In purchasing printed material, it is wise to see that the dye penetrates to the wrong side. Some colors may be set to insure their holding, but reasonable care should be taken to select well dyed goods. When threads are separated and white or lighter portions are exposed between them, the dye has failed to penetrate and the surface will soon fade. These materials should be avoided.

Materials which are especially suited for under garments are flour or sugar sacking, muslin, long cloth, cambric and sateen; with canton flannel, outing flannel, flannelette and wash flannels of wool, or wool and cotton and silk mixtures, for cooler weather.



A Gertrude petticoat made from a flour sack and trimmed with rick-rack. Cost, 16 cents.

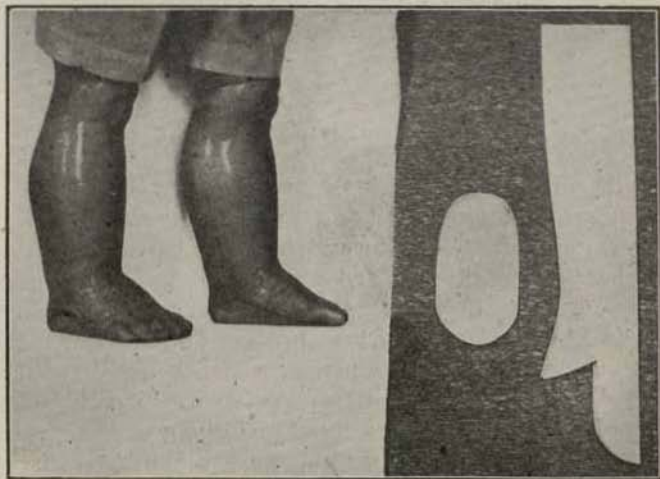
Little rompers, suits and dresses are especially appropriate made from chambray, gingham, madras, percales and sateen for lighter weight garments and kindergarten cloth, Devonshire, drill and galatea for heavier wear.

Seersucker and crepes save much ironing, but collect dust more rapidly than a smooth surface, so require more frequent changing.

Remodeling. Because of the rapid growth of children, it is usually better economy to utilize cast off adult clothing which is of first class quality than to use a poorer quality of new material. Such garments, however, should be carefully examined and only such portions used as will insure good wear and will be suitable and attractive. There is no merit in making over any article unless the artistic and utilitarian value of the finished product warrants the time and effort expended in its manufacture. Such materials should be examined and selected with the same precaution as that taken in the selection of new goods.



A Tommy Tucker suit made from an old shirt badly worn at the neck.



Stockings cut from a pair of mother's that were worn out in the foot and top.

Simplicity. With the very frequent laundering required, it is of the greatest importance that the construction of the garment be considered in its cost. One which requires much time and effort in making and in laundering, is an extravagance. Good lines and simple construction are economy..



A simple dress made from a sugar sack,
trimmed with stickerei and colored with Rit.
Cost of Dress, 19 cents.

ARTISTIC SELECTION.

Artistic ideals may be most easily cultivated in a child through the avenue of clothing. It costs no more to buy becoming colors and styles than ugly ones and the child's clothes should be as carefully selected as an adult's from the standpoint of suitability to purpose, environment and economic conditions and becomingness of line, proportion and color. These subjects are more fully discussed in the Extension Bulletin No. 26, "Clothing Selection for Women," which may be had upon request. Attention should be given to the color harmony of the entire wardrobe as well as to the individual garment. Garments becoming in themselves often lose their effect by wrong combinations.

ETHICAL SELECTION.

There is an intangible, yet very real relationship between clothing and character building. Dirty, ragged clothing will not cultivate self respect in the child nor win for it the confidence of others. Extravagant, fussy, fadish clothing will produce selfishness, vanity and affectation, but clothing which is adequate and attractive, simple, but substantial, clean and comfortable, will react upon the child, cultivating self respect and genuineness. Children so often live either down or up to the clothing they wear. It is not the quantity but the quality that counts. Improve your child's disposition, establish a high ideal and encourage habits of care and cleanliness through the thoughtful selection of the clothing you provide.

References:

"Children's Clothing," Extension Circular No. 48,
The Pennsylvania State College School of Agriculture
and Experiment Station.

"Textiles," by Woolman and McGowan.

