

Standards for Hospital Safety - Sewing “Do’s” and a Few “Don’ts”

Thank you all for your amazing work making doll clothes and toys. We hope you are having fun doing it! We are delighted to see the infinite variety of items that you create with the patterns we supply. We rely on your creativity to make beautiful, comforting and fun items that the children will play with long after they return home from their hospital stays.

The following are Hospital as well as Stitchin’ for Kids’ Sewing Requirements; they were established for safety reasons and because the children have compromised immune systems. Please be sure to read the Standards before you start your project. Since these are special gifts for special children, we want to make sure that the items are safe, beautiful and well made. The finished items need to be able to stand up to play and to last a long time as well as be beautiful!

1. Use fabric that has not been previously used for any other purpose. Use fabric that has not been treated with flame retardant chemicals (mostly commercial sleepwear fabrics).
2. Do NOT use scented dryer sheets, fabric softener or laundry detergent when washing and/or drying any of the items sent to Stitchin’ for Kids (SFK); hospitalized children may have compromised immune systems and/or allergies. If you use starch or any type of stiffener, please be sure it is not scented either and that it is completely washed out of the item before mailing.

We regret that we cannot give the hospitals items that have not been made in accordance with the Standards for Hospital Safety which have been developed to meet hospital specifications and to assure that donated items are scent-free, sturdy and functional. Donated items that do not meet all of the Standards for Hospital Safety will, to the extent possible, be given to children who are not hospitalized, but who will benefit from the toys and comfort items.

3. Use *small print* fabric designs that are appropriate for small clothes, toys, etc.
4. Please wash all your fabric before using it to make any of the Stitchin’ for Kids items. Please do not use fabric that “bleeds”.
5. Also, please wash your hands frequently when sewing and knitting doll clothes.
6. In addition, once you’ve finished sewing your items, please wash them and put them in the dryer for 15 minutes on moderate heat but at the highest temperature that your fabric/trim can withstand. Drying in the dryer is important for aspergillosis and dust mites.

After the items are fully dried, please put all the items into one plastic bag along with a note saying that the item has been washed. If you want to keep an outfit together, simply pin the pieces to each other.

7. Lining garments: When lining garments if you are making a flannel PJ top, nightgown, or robe, please do not self-line the garment; use a lightweight fabric instead. If you are making a dress or jumper or top from relatively heavy quilting cotton or a sturdy broadcloth or pinwale corduroy, use lightweight muslin or perhaps batiste to line the garment.

Straps: Straps on tops or dresses should be made from fabric, not ribbon, rick-rack or other decorative trim. Ribbon straps will eventually fray and become detached from the garment.

8. Use sew-on Velcro® (or other good hook and loop tape). Stitch the Velcro® on securely – the items must stand up to children’s play which makes the iron-on or adhesive Velcro® an inappropriate closure choice.

Cut the width of Velcro strip to 1/4 or 3/8 inch; the length of the Velcro® strip should be cut as specified in the pattern. Please use a single strip of Velcro as a closing and not small individual pieces. Sew around all four edges of Velcro.

9. Velcro® works in almost all cases, however, if in the rare instance Velcro® won’t work, please do not use snaps that are set with a tool or snap tape. A regular metal ¼” to 3/8” diameter metal snap carefully sewn on may be used if the Velcro® does not work. Please do not use ribbons, ties or buttons and buttonholes for closures because the child may not be able to manipulate them. Buttons and buttonholes are acceptable for hand knitted items only. Please do not use bows to close items, e.g. Halter tops - even a first grader may not yet know how to tie a bow behind a doll’s neck. Decorative bow/tie closures around the waist of a doll should be tacked to the garment at the back or sides so the belt is not easily lost. In addition, we recommend permanently tying the bow and attaching one end of the belt to the other with Velcro.
10. If using trim, lace, decorative buttons or other embellishments, please sew them on; do not just glue them on. Sewing trim, lace and other embellishments is easiest to do when the pattern pieces are flat.
11. When you are sewing, do stitch backwards for a few stitches at shoulder seams, armhole seams and any seam that requires a lot of “easing”, and clip all thread ends carefully.
12. Selvages of fabric are not woven evenly and are more tightly woven than the fabric itself. In addition, the selvedge is usually not straight. For these reasons, place pattern pieces away from selvedge edges when you are cutting out an item.
13. If you smoke, please take smoke breaks away from the Stitchin’ for Kids items while you are sewing for the children.
14. For all of the projects use the measurements in the patterns when cutting out your fabric.
15. Cut and make the Doll Clothes waistband as stated in patterns; adjust the skirt or pants to fit the waistband by making pleats or gathers in the skirt or pants.
16. Skirts should measure no shorter than 3 1/2 inches when measuring from the bottom of the waistband or casing to the bottom of the hem. Skorts and culottes can be shorter.
17. Use Stitchin’ for Kids patterns or patterns for Hearts for Hearts dolls. If you are mailing garments for the first time, please make and send a couple of samples to be sure they comply with Hospital Standards.

Some Wellie Wisher doll patterns also fit the Hearts’ dolls. However, if you do not have a Hearts for Hearts doll to fit your outfit to, we recommend you make up the Wellie Wisher pattern and send the item to us, and we can provide you with feedback about the fit – or

of course, if you live in the San Francisco Bay Area, attend a Doll Day and try your outfit on a doll we'll have available for fitting.

Note: If something in the Stitchin' for Kids patterns doesn't make sense to you, please let us know and perhaps we can improve the instructions or make examples to demonstrate a technique.

Hints and Additional Information:

When you wash the fabric, you are being sure that the fabric is not only clean, but that it's preshrunk and does not bleed. All the gifts we make must withstand repeated washings and even be put into the dryer for a small amount of time. Check the dye by pressing the damp fabric against a white paper towel; use appropriate heat setting on your iron.

If you have questions and can't come to the monthly first Wednesday Workshop (also known as Doll Day) at The Cotton Patch in Lafayette, CA, send your question to us at:

moreinfo@stitchinforkids.org