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HOUSEWIFERS' CHAT

Wednesday, May 29, 1935

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "SUMMER WEAR FOR SMALL FOLKS." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A.

--ooOoo--

I hear differ about the way to dress youngsters for the summer, from all I hear. Some mothers like to see their little girls all dressed up in starched frills on a summer day. To be sure, stiff frilly frocks won't allow much play, without being ruined, and they don't seem to make the small daughter very comfortable, but they do look cute and dainty, especially to mother's afternoon callers.

Then, other mothers I know -- busy mothers who haven't much time to fuss about clothes -- put their youngsters in stiff denim overalls for the season and let that settle the summer clothing problem. Overalls aren't so good looking, to be sure, and they're hard to launder, but they cost little and you can buy them almost anywhere, and they're made of such heavy fabric that no child can hurt them much, whether he climbs trees or falls in the duck pond.

Still other mothers don't agree with either plan. They tell me that they want their children in clothes that are comfortable for play, yet good-looking. Yes, and what's more, they want clothes that are practical and thrifty -- outfits that wear and wash well and don't cost too much. That's quite an order when you come to think of it -- garments that are good-looking, comfortable, durable, easy to wash, and inexpensive.

Because mothers have been writing to the Bureau of Home Economics for years, asking where to buy and how to make clothes that would answer these specifications, the people at the Bureau have been busy working on the problem.

One summer outfit they designed is the sunsuit ensemble, which will do for either little boys or girls. You may have seen some of these two-in-one, sand-rile-an-street arrangements. They aren't hard to make. And mothers who have tried them out tell me that they are almost the only clothing any pre-school youngster needs in hot weather, whether he lives in the country or the city. You see, the underhalf of the garment is the sun-and-play suit -- just comfortable panties set in a net top. The net top lets the sun's rays reach the child's skin as he plays. The upper half of the outfit is a matching dress or blouse that the child can slip on over the sunsuit when he goes indoors to dinner or downtown with Mother.

Of course, if an outfit like this answers all the specifications it needs to be cut for comfort -- that is, cut to fit the child, to give him plenty of freedom yet not so slip and slide off his shoulders. And it needs to be made of comfortable material, soft, pliable cotton fabric, never anything stiff or heavy. And such an outfit needs to be very simple in cut and trim -- easy to make and easy to launder afterward. If you're going to make summer clothes for the youngsters in your family, and if you are interested in this sunsuit ensemble

idea, you can write the Bureau of Home Economics in Washington, D.C., for further information. They can tell you where to buy patterns for such an outfit and give you other suggestions about making.

But this year many mothers are buying children's ready-mades instead of making them themselves. So the letters are coming in for information on buying as well as making. Several mothers have inquired about the good materials for children's clothing -- for sun suits, dresses, and little boy's clothes.

Well, seems to me right now is a good time to consider this matter of fabrics in children's summer ready-mades. Of course, cottons are the hot-weather materials for children, but some cottons are good buys and some aren't. Let's consider the cotton fabrics that answer the specifications we mentioned -- fabrics for clothes that are comfortable, wear well, wash well, are good looking and not too expensive.

First, about fabrics for comfort. The only material that really is comfortable for children is soft and pliable. You may love starched organdie because it looks dainty, or you may like stiff denim because it's durable, but neither of these materials will give comfort to their young wearers. Some mothers buy percale because it's cheap and durable. Well, children do endure clothes made of it. And they also endure scratchy seersucker garments when they would be much more comfortable in soft seersucker. But if you're buying for comfort, you'll avoid iron-clad materials. A child grows so fast that he doesn't need clothes that will last a life time. The soft, pliable, non-wrinkling garments that are good choices for children include soft gingham, chambray, broadcloth, swiss, lawn and voile. Soft cottons with a pongee weave are good buys for children. To be sure the material in a garment is soft enough, test it by rubbing on the inside of your wrist.

Second, about fabrics that wash well. Children's clothes that won't wash are generally a waste of money. So be sure to read all labels on a ready-made garment before you buy, and also ask the salesgirl if the material is guaranteed against shrinkage, and if the color is fast to both sun and washing.

Third, about wear. Plain smooth even weaves wear longest. Sleazy and heavily sized fabrics usually shrink and become limp after laundering. Stiffly starched ready-mades are likely to come out of the first wash cheap looking. Be sure the fabric has no defects like dropped threads or broken threads. Places like this wear out early.

Finally, about color and design in the fabric. Of course, your own taste is the guide here, but you may be interested in a couple of ideas offered by the clothing people. They are in favor of both gay prints and bright plain colors for children. But they say that small designs are generally more becoming to small people than large spotty designs. That's just a matter of proportion. Then, they say that soft gay colors are more appropriate than deep intense shades that give the effect of "all dress and no child." Children enjoy bright colors. That's one reason they should wear them. Bright colors are also a protection in summer, for motorists can see them so easily.

