

Bosom Buddies

Drainage Bag for Breast Surgery Patients

When a woman has breast cancer surgery, she is more than likely to leave hospital with tubes protruding that drain her incision. Each tube ends in a small plastic bag that holds the liquid drained. Woman may leave with one to three drains, and in some cases a patient wears them for as long as two or three weeks.

The purpose of the drainage bag is to hold the drains, and allow the patient to go out in public. This design can later serve as a shopping bag as well. Each surgery patient receives a drainage bag from a breast care nurse.



Fabrics

The bags are a great way to use up scrap fabrics from the never ending piles that crafty people seem to collect. The fabric can be sturdy cotton, calico or canvas up to and included backed drapery fabric, upholstery fabric and damask. Lighter weight fabrics can't hold the weight of full drainage bags.

The group I sew with seems to find all kinds of fabrics and now their friends are providing scraps from old curtains. Curtain shops may also provide old sample books or off-cuts. I just bought a big backed curtain in a colourful print for \$7 at the Salvos shop and will make 3-4 bags out of it. I didn't have to purchase fabric but I thought the colourful fabric would be fun to sew.

Decorating

Our groups of sewers, from Wamboin, Bywong and Sutton, have been making the new bags for a few years and have found it fun to do some decorating to keep the projects interesting. Bags have included decorative machine stitching, appliques of flowers, appliques of old cross stitches someone didn't want, quilters squares, piecing together of several fabrics, contrasting handles and so forth. Use your imagination and have fun.

Alternatively plain bags of printed fabrics are also great and allow sewers to get more bags finished. The nurses need about 450 **EACH YEAR!!**

Cutting

The bag can be cut as one long piece of a single fabric 11 x 34 inches or 25cm x 86cm so there is no bottom seam.

Alternatively you may want to use two separate pieces to fit the cuts out of a scrap fabric, or to combine two different fabrics for a design feature. Cut two rectangles 11 x 17 inches or 27cm x 44cm which allows ½ inch or 1cm seams for a finished size 10 x 17 inches (for quilters) or 25cm x 42cm.

To fit scrap fabrics you may vary for as much as an inch or 2.5cm in any direction.

The shoulder strap is cut about 50 inches long x 4-5 inches wide (127cm long x 10-12 cm wide).

Assembly

Sew the side seams (and bottom seam if using separate front and back).

Fold over and finish a hem about 3-4 cm (1 ¼ - 1 ¾ inches) around the top and stitch.

For the strap, fold and press in the long edges about 1.5cm each side and then fold in half lengthwise and pin. Top stitch along each edge.



This is much easier and stronger than trying to sew one seam and then turn the long handle right side out.

Attach the handle at either side seam. If the fabric is thick, stitch to one side of the seam, with one end at the front of the bag and one end at the back of the bag. A full square of stitching is suggested for strength.

