

Jenn Carney's nursing and hands-free pumping camisole

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I believe this is the first ever camisole that can be used for nursing or for hands-free pumping with any kind of pump. As a working mom of four, pumping twice a day, I find it very necessary to be able to work on the computer while pumping. I wanted something that would keep my belly covered when I pulled up my shirt to pump so that I would not be overly exposed if someone entered the room, and I wanted the ability to pump hands-free without having to put on an extra bustier or buy a new expensive pump. Also, I wanted the garment to be able to be worn under regular clothing without causing any bumps or round circles around the front, if you know what I mean. And, I needed to be able to come home from work and nurse the baby immediately, without having to take it off. But apparently, this just was not available anywhere, so I had to design my own.

This camisole is a women's large (approximately size 12 - 14) with a generous length and a loose fit at the waist. It is fitted at the bust in order to be able to hold the pumping flanges in place. It is bound with FOE (fold-over elastic) which is also used to make the straps. The straps are not adjustable in length, as you can size them appropriately since you are sewing it yourself! The front features overlapping, FOE bound layers. You can just slip the pump's breast-shields in place, and the elastic will hold them there without any fooling around with clips, etc. This is not meant to replace a bra, but rather go over a bra. If you wish to use this instead of a bra (for instance, as a sleep bra), you might want to make the elastic under the bust tighter.



Finished product (worn over a shirt to protect my modesty as much as is possible when showing off a pumping cami!):



Here's a shot showing how it can support the breast-shields and glass bottles, even without suction!

Materials needed:

- 1 yd cotton/lycra (I used white rib knit from JoAnn's)
- 0.5 inch wide FOE -- 2 yds
- 30 inches 1/4" or 3/8" inch wide regular elastic

Cutting instructions:

- Cut 1 of pattern piece 1 (top layer) on fold
- Cut 1 of pattern piece 2 (bottom layer) on fold
- Cut 1 of pattern piece 3 (back) on fold
- Cut 2 of pattern piece 4 (lower bodice) on fold

Sewing instructions:



1. Finish the two curved edges (the edges near the armpits) of piece 1 with FOE. Use a 3 step zigzag on a wide setting. Stretch the FOE just a tiny tiny amount as you are applying -- just enough to keep it from looking stretched out when you are done. Press when finished (careful that the iron is not hot enough to melt your FOE).



It should look like this when you are finished.

2. Finish the bottom curved edge of piece 2 with FOE in the same manner. Press.



3. Line up the top edges of piece 1 and piece 2 and pin. Then bring the bottom edges of piece 1 behind the bottom edges of piece 2 like this:



It should now look like this if it has been lined up correctly:



4. Now finish the top edge with FOE making sure you are catching both piece 1 and piece 2. Press when finished.

NOTE: Pressing is absolutely critical here to get the edges to lay nice and flat so that you have a smooth profile later when you wear this under your shirt.



5. Carefully line up the sides and pin to the back (piece 3) right sides together.

6. Sew the side seams with a serger or with a stretch stitch on your regular machine and a zigzag to finish the edges. 1/4" seam allowance is included on the pattern pieces. The upper bodice is now essentially complete (although straps have not been added).

7. Place the two lower bodice pieces right side together and sew the side seams as in step 6.



8. Place the lower bodice inside the upper bodice right sides together and stitch with a 5/8" inch seam allowance, using a stretch stitch.



9. Now attach your 30 inches of 1/4" or 3/8" regular elastic underneath the bust by zigzagging it onto the seam allowance, stretching while sewing.



10. Press the seam allowance (with elastic) up towards the top. Topstitch all the way around.

11. At this point, you should try on the camisole and measure how long you need the straps to be from the pointy ends in the front over your bust to the pointy ends in the back. For me, this distance was 8.5 inches.



12. Now you still need to finish the underarm top edges and make the straps. Starting at a side seam, bind the edge with FOE using your triple zigzag. When you get to the pointy end where the strap will begin, just continue sewing on the FOE so that the strap is just FOE that is folded over in half and sewn shut. See in this picture how I am continuing to sew the FOE straight ahead?

Continue sewing until you reach your desired strap length (8.5 inches for me). Then continue sewing the FOE right onto the unbound edge of the cami until you get back to your side seam. (I am having trouble explaining this step -- you are basically making a big loop of FOE from the underarm side seam right up the front, over your shoulder, down the back, and back under the arm.)



13. When you have reached the side seam, cut the FOE leaving a 1 inch tail.



14. Fold the tail over and stitch it down with a straight stitch. Then cut off the excess very close to the stitching.

15. Repeat steps 12 and 13 on the other side to make the second strap.

16. Last step -- hem the bottom. I pressed a 5/8" hem and sewed with a double needle.

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