

PJ Shorts for Virginia

Working up comfortable garments for her when her health was increasingly fragile.



[Carol Kimball]

One of the last things Virginia got done when she was starting to feel her illness coming on was to pull a crotchmaster template to send to me.

I used it to work up these PJ pants from the stabilized jersey she'd gotten from her mother (along with dinosaurs, alligators wearing shades and two colorways of turkeys).



This first long pair had pockets. The legs were straight, not yet tapered in.

In the few days it took to get them to her, she was having daily figure changes, most significantly bloating from meals.

Left: with pants pulled up so that the crotch fit; middle, so that waistband was comfortable across her stomach (lower); and right, how much that had dropped the crotch.

assistance from his nibs, the Nebulizer



The shorts that followed had no pockets (to minimize bulk and chafing). Left set: on me, with rough padding to her dimensions; right, the zippered set on her. The elastic waist on the long pants was getting difficult for her to pull up and down to use the toilet due to joint inflammation in her hands/wrists/arms/shoulders.

The solution was a big plastic zipper (the smoothest of all my stock to pull up/down) and a soft hair elastic connected to the pull to slip a few fingers through.



Virginia:

The jammy shorts from Carol Kimball have landed! Very comfy in the waist and crotch. I can feel a little stiffness from the zipper when I sit and it bends against my hip, but it doesn't rub or scratch. The flat front is very comfy against my waist, no ruching from the elastic.

The amount of ease in hip and thigh is good, lots of ease, but not so much extra fabric that it bunched or twisted. Comfy. Will wear for a couple of days and switch to the non-zipper for comparison. Carol also sent a non-zipper version, so I'll try that out later and compare.

The hair elastic zipper pull is also very necessary for my hands to use the zipper, though the waistband is sized well enough that I could also just pull it on and off. Zipper pulls down easily, but I need to hold the bottom to pull it back up. Multiple trips to the bathroom show it works, though I still have to do a slight shimmy to get the shorts down, but I can get it on and off myself.

Slept in the zippered shorts - the zipper is pretty much a nonentity in terms of feeling it. Despite all my sliding around in attempts to reach a least painful position, the zipper stayed closed. The only time I felt it was when the bottom of the zipper pressed against my thigh crease - maybe taking 2 inches off the bottom would be good, so that it stops well above that bend (would sacrifice a bit of opening to get shorts off, but I don't think enough to make it nonviable) [CK: did make a version with a shorter zipper].

So, after wearing both versions of the Carol-designed PJ shorts - zipper and non-zipper, I can provide a bit of feedback/comparison. Both shorts are based on my crotchmaster PJ pants with exactly the same amount of ease and cut and finished exactly the same except for the presence of a zipper on the side front of one. The zippered version wins for returning bathroom functions to me. I can easily pull the zipper down without having to grip or use much force and the zipper opens smoothly and wide so that the pants just fall down. It is also easier to pull back up to my hips when I'm sitting and let me zip back up easily with no strain on my hands, elbows or shoulders.

Alas, one bad night showed the weakness in the zipper. [she was in enough pain that the pull worked down and it twisted apart].

The elastic only version requires hubby to help me in the morning in order to pull the elastic over my hips. Hooking my fingers in the waistband and pushing/pulling to stretch the elastic puts strain on my joints. Often, I can't pull it open enough due to no strength, pain, stiffness, etc.

Also, instead of being able to just let the pants drop, I have to bend at the waist/hip, or knees to push it down - more movements that hurt. My symptoms change throughout the day and the pain and stiffness usually eases in the afternoon, so I only really need his help with the elastic in the morning with the elastic-only waisted shorts.

I think I'll be sleeping in my skivvies and putting the zippered shorts on for the day. May graduate to being able to use the elastic-only when I start getting better response to the meds in the morning.

I will be testing a similar pair of shorts without the zipper tonight (also a precaution against zippery shenanigans in case my body decides to do Joint Pain 2: Electric Boogaloo).

Part of the problem the zipper helped solve is that I don't have to stretch the elastic open to go over my hips - no strain on my hands. Severe joint and muscle pain meant I couldn't bend many of my joints and my hands cannot grasp things. There's accompanying muscle weakness. The arm/shoulder motions as well as the bending of the hips and knees to pull bottoms on and off (so that I can go to the bathroom) hurt or are not possible (hubby has been doing it for me).

Luckily I don't have any painful skin lesions in these areas, but it was a consideration in terms of making sure whatever we did didn't become something that irritates the skin and develop lesions. As I am pretty bed-bound/couch-bound, I wanted comfy, easy clothing. Started with my linen shifts, but managing the excess fabric was adding effort that I didn't want to deal with (both in terms of movement and the fact that it bunched up under me in bed).

[CK]

We tried magnets at the top of the placket. they took about the same amount of effort to open as the zipper, and had the advantage of reseating themselves if disarranged. Hard to say how they compared with the zipper as she was rapidly losing the hand strength to deal with either.



I made her one more pair with a shorter zipper, which was reported a success.

I was prepared to sew as many versions with as many variations as she wanted. This was where she ran out of time.