

CLOTHING

Patching knees in pants

no. 8.530

by K. Williams¹

Do you have any pants with holes in the knees?

Quick Facts...

Pants with any holes in the knees usually can be repaired by sewing a patch over the hole.

Sewing a patch on by machine is harder to do than sewing it on by hand, but machine stitching is more sturdy.

An iron-on patch is simple and fast, but the ironing must be done correctly to hold the patch.

Patches can be made in interesting shapes by using patterns from coloring books or other places.

Preparation

If you are going to sew on a patch, start by cutting off the ragged edges of the hole in the pants.

- Cut a piece of sturdy material about 2 inches longer and wider than the hole. If possible, use the same kind of material as the pants. (Figure 1A.)
- Next, fold under all the edges of the patch 1/2 inch. Press the edges to crease them. (Figure 1B.)
- Pin the patch over the hole. Be sure that the patch is smooth and flat and straight on the pant leg. (Figure 1C.)

To Machine-Sew the Patch

If you are going to sew the patch on by machine, you will have to do some adjusting of the material on the pant leg. A machine-stitched patch stays on better, but it's harder to do on small pant legs. Be careful when you sew. It's easy to sew the pant leg together.

- Start at the bottom of the pant leg and gather it up in your hands to make a "nest." The patch will be in the middle of the nest. When you sew, keep pulling the back of the pant leg away from the needle. (Figure 1D.)
- Start sewing at the upper corner of the patch. Use a medium length stitch. (Figure 1E.)
- Stitch around the patch close to the edge.
- To make a nice corner, stop the machine with the needle down at the corner. Lift the presser foot and turn the pant leg. Lower the presser foot and sew another side. (Figure 1F.) Repeat for each corner.
- Overlap the stitches at the end to keep them from coming loose.
- Figure 1G shows how the patched knee will look.

To Hand-Sew the Patch

If you are going to sew the patch on by hand, use the backstitch for a strong patch. It looks like machine stitching.

- To back stitch, push the needle from inside the pants through the pant leg and the patch. Push the needle down through the material about 1/8 inch back of where you started. Bring the needle out one stitch in front of that stitch. (Figure 2A.)
- Keep back stitching around the patch. (Figure 2B.)
- Patches also can be different shapes to make the pants look interesting. Use pictures in coloring books or magazines for patterns. (Figure 3.)

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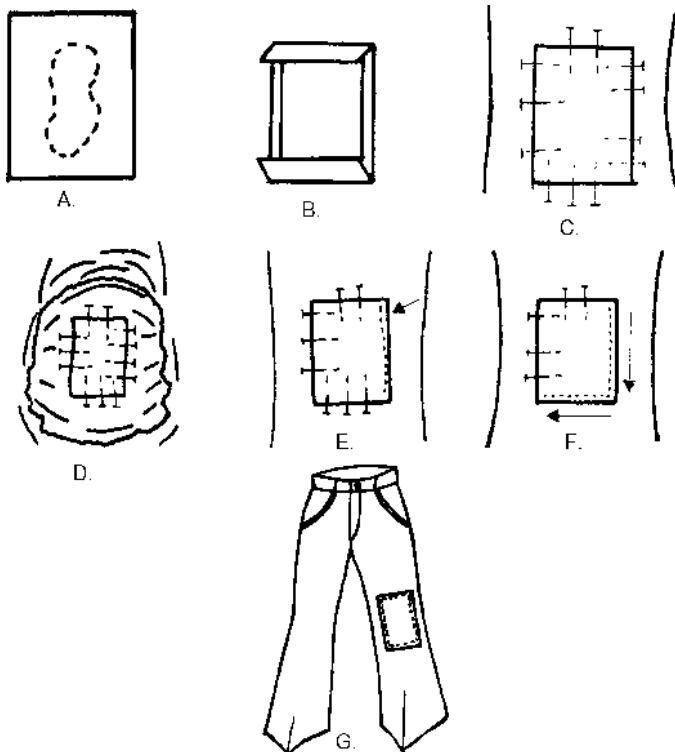


Figure 1.

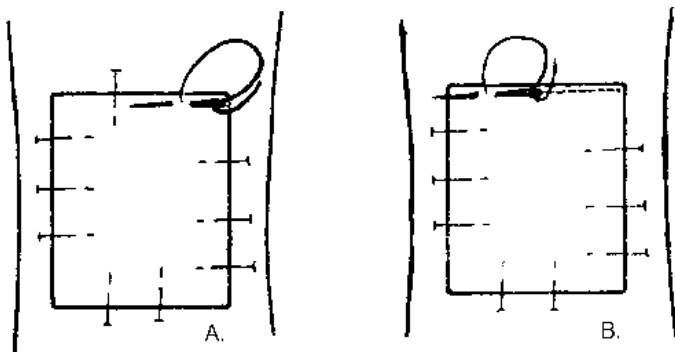


Figure 2.

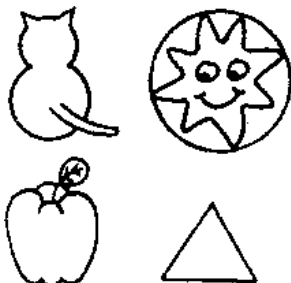


Figure 3.

To Iron on a Patch

It is easy and fast to iron on a patch.

- Use an iron-on mending patch. Follow directions on the package. Cut the patch a little bigger than the hole in the pants. Round off the corners of the patch. (Figure 4A.)
- Put a folded grocery sack or newspaper inside the pant leg so the patch won't stick to the back of the pant leg.
- Press the pant leg around the hole to get it smooth and warm.
- Put the patch over the hole with the shiny side down. Make sure that the patch is placed straight on the pant leg. (Figure 4B.)
- Hold the iron firmly on the patch and press according to the package directions. Lift the iron to move to the next section. Do not slide the iron. Press all edges of the patch. (Figure 4C.)
- Let it cool. Then, check to see if the patch has stuck. If not, press it again and let it cool. Pull the sack or paper out of the pant leg. Any paper that happens to stick will wash off.

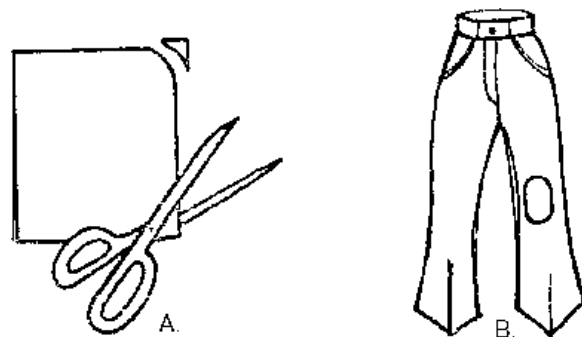


Figure 4.

¹Reviewed by K. Williams, Colorado State University Cooperative Extension apparel and textiles specialist, design merchandising and consumer sciences. Information from University of Minnesota Bulletin HS-54, *How to Patch Knees in Pants*. Adapted with permission.