

GLOBE AND MAIL – APRIL 14, 2007

PREGNANCY SUSPENDERS

REBECCA ECKLER

It's no secret that pregnancy can be uncomfortable. It's not just the weight gain, the sudden cravings, or the baby pressing up against your rib cage. For many with a bun in the oven, trying to keep your trousers up over the growing bulge is a regular annoyance.

As the belly expands, it pushes down on your waistband, and your pants or skirts go down with it. Laura Kronen decided to do something about it.

"It's an unavoidable evil," says the New York mother of two. She created Belly Ups while she was pregnant and her maternity wardrobe consisted mainly of under-the-belly pants.

Belly Ups are suspenders that attach your bra to your waistband. They come in nude, black or black with pink hearts (\$13 U.S., babyisastar.com). "I was tired of pulling and tugging on my pants all day when I was pregnant. But when I looked around for an accessory to solve my problem, nothing existed," she says.

So Kronen mocked up a pair of mini-suspenders, attached them on each side of her body from her bra to her waistband, and started to wear them daily.

"It instantly solved my problem and made my pregnancy much more enjoyable," she says. "It's the little things in life, right?"

Even now, although she's not pregnant, she continues to wear them daily. "I feel naked if I don't put them on."

Most pregnant women today want to continue to dress the way that they did pre-pregnancy, and this includes the cute and sexy low-rise pants we all love so much.

Kronen knew she had a good idea, but she had no idea how popular Belly Ups would be.

The response, she says, has been "remarkable." In just six months since she began marketing them, Belly Ups are now in more than 100 stores, in eight countries. In fact, it's not just pregnant woman buying Belly Ups. She has seen women over 80 wearing them, with their elastic-waist pants. She has also had teenage customers who wear them so that their skivvies won't show when they bend over. Tori Spelling, Jennie Garth, Marcia Cross and Amanda Peet have all worn Belly Ups.

"For me, being stylish while pregnant was a requirement. Adding 30 pounds to my frame never meant having to break out the muumuus. Pregnancy is not the time to adopt a new style of dressing," Kronen says.

"It's such a simple product, but I can't tell you how many times pregnant women have told me that 'I've saved their lives.' "

rebeccaekler@yahoo.com