

How to make Cool Neck Ties for our Soldiers

This set of directions is originally from Military Pride News for making cooling neckties. Our troops will be having to do their job in 100+ degree temperatures during the summer and these are a great way to stay a little cooler. The info on how to make these was provided to me by Karen Stark of Oklahoma, as part of her "Hugs project." I just added the diagrams and simplified the wording. They called them "Chilly Willy's" but Karen loves the idea of calling them "HUGS". She'd love it if every American citizen in the Middle East could receive a "hug" from home this summer. So make some of these for your care packages or help out Karen, either way you'll be helping our troops beat the heat. One more thing, Hugs can be gently heated by microwave or hot water and used as a reusable hand/pocket warmer this winter when it gets really cold in Iraq. How neat is that???

(It has been suggested the soldiers would like the ties to be longer so they fit down their body inside their uniform. You will need to adjust the suggested measurements shown here to accomplish this.)

A- For each tie - cut fabric 45" x 5". See note 1 for material ideas.

B- Fold in half lengthwise with right sides together (so it's really long and skinny) and sew a 1/2 inch seam all the way along the long edge (keep short edges open). You'll want a short stitch length (I set my machine at 2 so the crystals won't get out).

C- Turn fabric right side out. You can roll it like a tube sock. See note 2 for an idea on how to do this

D- Press (or iron) fabric with seam line centered and facing down on the back (like you would a dress tie...you don't want to see the seam.. plus it's easier to iron this way).

E- Mark fabric at midpoint.

F- Then from that point mark 10 inches on each side. This will give you 1 - 20" pocket.

G- Stitch across the tie to make the bottom of the pocket.

H- Fill with 2 tsp. watering crystals. See note 3 for how to get these crystals.

I- Sew the other end of the pocket.

J- Turn the open ends inside (like rolling a sock) and stitch for a neat/clean finish.

Note 1: Use 100% cotton fabric (camo, tan, sand colored, etc – bright colors might attract gunfire) with a tight weave so the crystals won't ooze out. Patterns are okay but make sure it's something that your husband or son would want to wear...lol. *Make sure it's something that will feel good against the skin. You can make 24 ties from one twin sheet - 31 from a full size. Even white sheets are easily tea dyed. 200 and 180 thread count works great as well. 150 works okay, I haven't had any gel ooze out of those (yet) but they won't last as long. Before using, wash in hot water to remove sizing.

Note 2: A tip from the Hugs project: **With thanks to Kenneth Baker, one of our gentlemen sewing gurus** Even an 18" piece of 3/4" PVC will work. You will need to stitch closed one of the ends to use this method. You slip the tie over the pipe and then push it through with a 24" long piece of dowel rod.

Note 3: Make a sample one first and test it out to make sure you used the right amount of watering crystals (some products vary). This insures that it fits comfortably around the neck. Two sources for polymer crystals. Online at <http://www.watersorb.com/mainstore.html> and Schultz watering crystals available at Wal Mart in the gardening section near rose food. Watersorb figures out to be a bit cheaper (including postage and they ship right to your door - quickly).

Directions for use:

Soak in water for 15-20 minutes. Only soak 7-10 to use as headband. Warm water speeds hydration. Remove from water and pat dry so the polymer spreads out equally along the tube. Please remember, never squeeze tightly, the polymer will "ooze" out via the material if you do. Can be refrigerated. Hydrated polymer has the capacity to hold heat/cold 2.84 times longer than pure water. Tie "hug" around your neck (or head). When tie starts to dry out, soak in water again. When the tie warms up to body temp, submerge in cool water. Hand wash in mild dishwashing liquid then rinse clean. Let them soak overnight in a large bowl of clean water to let the polymer purge the impurities from it. You can keep the ties fresher if you put about one tablespoon of rubbing alcohol into the hydration water. (Do not store in Ziploc bag until completely dry or it will mildew).

Here is the label Karen uses on the "Hugs" she makes:

Dear Military Hero - - -

We appreciate you for your service to your country & so we want you to have this "hug" from home. When you place it around your neck, please remember there is someone who made this by hand just for you & who wishes they could actually give you a real hug. We want you to know that we are praying for your safety.

You have been hugged by _____

A KISS is a circular “beanie” which can be worn under a helmet. They serve as a type of cooling device and are often referred to as head coolers. Though our focus is to make these for our troops serving in desert environments, they can be used by anyone. These will also work under a ball cap if you cut them slightly smaller and use even less crystals, and if the ball cap has mesh for air circulation. They are great for farmers, lawn mowers or anyone who works out in the heat all day. Kisses can also be heated in wintertime and used as a reusable hand warmer.

DIRECTIONS FOR MAKING A KISS

1. Cut two 6 1/2—7” circles.
2. Seam around the edge using a 1/4” to 1/2” seam allowance, and leave an opening about 1 1/2” to 2” for turning right side out. (You can also use a serger or tight zigzag and NOT turn them.)
3. Turn right side out, no ironing necessary.
4. Fill with a **very scant** 1/2 teaspoon of crystals.
5. Close by stitching on the outside to close opening, encasing a soak tag in the seam. Soak tag should read: Soak in water for about 20 minutes then place in your helmet for a cooling effect.
6. Hydrate the first one and see if 1/2 teaspoon is too much or not enough. The KISS should puff up about 1/4” to 1/2”
7. Adjust amount of crystals if needed. Better too few crystals as too many will make it difficult to snap the helmet strap closed.

Place finished KISS in a plastic bag, which can be used for hydrating and include this or other personalized KISS label.

**Remember when you were a child
At night safe in your bed
When Mom would tuck you snugly in
Then kiss you on the head.**

**Well, here’s a little “kiss” for you
It seemed the perfect name
It’s safety that we wish for you
So now, we do the same.**

**Just soak this “kiss” in water
For 20 minutes or more
Then place it on your head
To cool you off for sure.**

