

GIRLS FOR GIRLS PROJECT

www.girlsforgirlsproject.org

Sewing Reusable Cloth Pads

If you would like to help donate cloth pads to women in need, this page can give you some information to get started. Even if you know how to make the actual pads, there are some points to consider when making pads that will be donated including what fabric choices, styles and usability to consider. Some patterns and basic sewing instructions are included in the pad making sections here.

What fabric will you need?

Natural fibers are absorbent, breathable and cooler to wear in hot climates. So 100% cotton fabrics are good to use for the top layer and internal layers of pads. The softer fabrics like flannel and t-shirt "jersey" feel nicer against skin, but any 100% cotton will be good.

Top layer some popular fabric choices for pad top:

Jersey (t-shirt fabric) It wears better than a flannel and may be more absorbent than plain cotton

Flannel, and a good all-around choice in pad tops with the soft feel

Velour, feels very soft and nice against the skin can feel drier than flatter fabrics. It also can help quickly grab the flow and allow it to absorb into the pad to avoid leaking.

Cotton Some women prefer this over flannel for the feeling; with some saying they feel drier as a panty liner than a fluffier fabric that can feel hotter, but it does not trap the flow as successfully as the fluffier pad toppings, so may feel "wetter".

For the absorbent core of an "All in One" pad, or for the absorbent inserts in a pocket pad, cotton toweling has the following absorbency range - 1 layer = "light", 2 layers = "medium", 3 layers = "heavy". Cotton flannel has: 4 layer = "light", 8 layers = "medium", 10 layers = "medium-heavy".

Core absorbent layer

The inside of the pads is usually made from something absorbent, to soak up the flow. This can be a sewn in "core" (As with an 'All in One '), or can be removable insert (Such as with a pocket pad). You will need to use the right absorbency for your flow, so some fabrics will be better suited to you than others. Generally this is a natural fiber, but there are some synthetic options.

Sometimes it is better to buy a more absorbent fabric that you will use less of, than to buy a cheaper one you will use more of. This part will determine how thick the pad is overall, and if you like thick pads, then that's fine, but if you would like to keep your pads as thin as possible, then the absorbency needs some careful thought. On the surface, thin fabrics like jersey and flannel/flannelette seem like a good choice because they are thin - but the absorbency in a fabric comes from the thickness and density. Also what the fabric is made of. For example - one layer of a bamboo fleece is probably about the same thickness of 3 layers of flannel, but the bamboo would probably be up to 3 times more absorbent. Plus if you are using several layers of something thinner, you're cutting out all those extra layers, and adding up all those extra costs - sometimes it can be quicker and cheaper to buy a more absorbent fabric you need less of.

Some popular choices for the core absorbent layer:

Terry Cloth, Hemp Terry - This term is usually used to refer to the cotton 'toweling' (like you would find towels made from). Cotton toweling ("terry") is quite absorbent, but less absorbent than hemp terry and usually more bulky.

Flannel - This is a really thin fabric and not very absorbent on its own, but when you use several layers together you increase the absorbency.

Fleece - A fabric with one smooth side and the other is fluffy (used for sweatshirts) It is thinner than hemp fleece and polar fleece. Lunapads, the makers of commercial fabric pads, uses this.

Microfiber/Microterry - This is a synthetic fabric, commonly used in household cleaning cloths. It reportedly holds around 7 times its weight in liquid, making it a very absorbent fabric while being quite thin. It can however take a long time to fully dry if made into a core of several layers. Sometimes this is used with a natural fiber to increase the absorbency.

How much to use for absorbency?

How much you'll need depends on what fabric you are using, and the absorbency wanted. As a guide, 1 layer of a bamboo/cotton/hemp fleece or terry would be a "light" absorbency (you could consider a hemp or bamboo to be suitable for light-medium if it's got waterproofing). 2 layers of these would be "medium", 3 would be "heavy". Bamboo is more absorbent than hemp and hemp is more absorbent than cotton. It is not a good idea to go thicker than this, as the more fabric in the pad, the longer it takes to dry and the harder it is to get it fully clean. Flannel is thinner so you would need more layers to achieve the same level of absorbency, so for example you might need 6-8 layers of flannel to equal one of a denser and more absorbent cotton terry.

Waterproof layer

The inside of the pad can have a leak proof liner that works like a disposable pad does - in helping prevent the blood from soaking through the layers of the pad and onto your under garments. Water resistant fabric isn't completely waterproof, but will form a layer that is more resistant to leaking than the other fabrics in the pad.

Some popular choice for the waterproof layer:

100% synthetics. "Rip stop" nylon and other 100% nylon fabrics

Micro fleece and Polar fleece are all "water-resistant", in that they will offer some leak protection but are not completely leak proof.

Waterproof mattress pads, plastic tablecloths and even shower curtains can be used as waterproof layers as these are generally waterproof (Thicker tablecloths/shower curtains are probably a better choice too as very thin ones that may tear).

You can purchase waterproof fabric called "PUL" from online diaper making websites, which is a superior "breathable" waterproof fabric used in making cloth pads. This is the most ideal fabric, as it is more durable and breathable. Micro/polar fleece with a layer of rip stop nylon would be a second-best option if you can't use something completely waterproof. PUL stands for Poly Urethane Laminate - This is a fabric (polyester or cotton) that has been coated on one side with a thin film of waterproof plastic (polyurethane) It is considered to be "breathable" - as the waterproof membrane lets no water through, but will allow a little air through. - a cotton print or a plain polyester PUL - This has no additional backing. It doesn't slip around as much as you may think (depending on the particular PUL) the advantage is that without the extra layer of fabric the pad can be thinner and more flexible, but it can also be a little more plain and may shift around a little more than a pad with a slip resistant backing. Examples of brands - 'procare', 'fabrite', 'gore-tex'.

Backing layer Some popular choices for the backing layer:

Corduroy - a ridged fabric that can help stop the pad moving around in your underpants. A good choice for wingless pads if you want something natural (Corduroy is a cotton fabric) and that doesn't add much extra thickness.

Fleece - helps water proof/resistance and also helps stop the pad moving, but can feel a little hotter and adds thickness to the pad.

Cotton - for a pretty look to the pad, using quilting cottons or other pretty prints, about as non-slip as most PUL, but fancier.

Flannel can be a pretty and slip resistant backing.

NOTE: Some pads (those without waterproofing) can be worn either side up, but it's important to remember to indicate which way a pad goes that does have waterproofing.... particularly if it's a hidden layer.

Wet bag

A "wet bag" is the name for a pouch/bag that can be used to place used pads into. While the name may seem to mean it could hold water, the idea is simply that it is made from a fabric that will contain any odor and if the pads are wet with blood, there will be no leakage.

PUL, vinyl, plastic tablecloth material, or a thick polyester/nylon fabric (or double layer nylon) would be suitable. Even a PVC pencil case would be appropriate for a wet bag.

Ideally, a wet bag should be provided with any cloth pad donation kit. This allows the recipient to carry a clean pad in the bag with her to work/school, and provides somewhere to store the used pad, when pads are changed during the day.

Use a piece of waterproof fabric about 10 by 12 inches and fold in half and stitch the sides to make a 6 by 10 inch bag

Fold over the top edge and stitch to then add a drawstring for closing.

For more information and where to donate pads contact:

Dawn Malcolm at dawnmalcolm25@gmail.com

This is a Lighting the Path non-profit project

www.lightingthepath.org

The base pad with three layers, cotton top and bottom and a water resistant layer in the middle.



The "All in One" pad with additional absorbent layers sewn on the top.



Adding additional pieces to form the pockets for the pocket pad base.



Pocket pad inserts



"Pocket pad" with the absorbent folded insert in place.

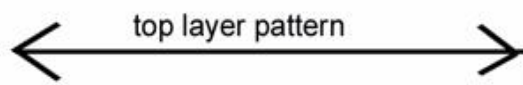


Wet bag



The all in one pad is made with a base of two layers of fabric with wings and additional layers sewn in the center for absorbency

Top Layers should consist of a soft top layer fabric, and absorbant layer and a water proof layer and are sewn onto the base layers



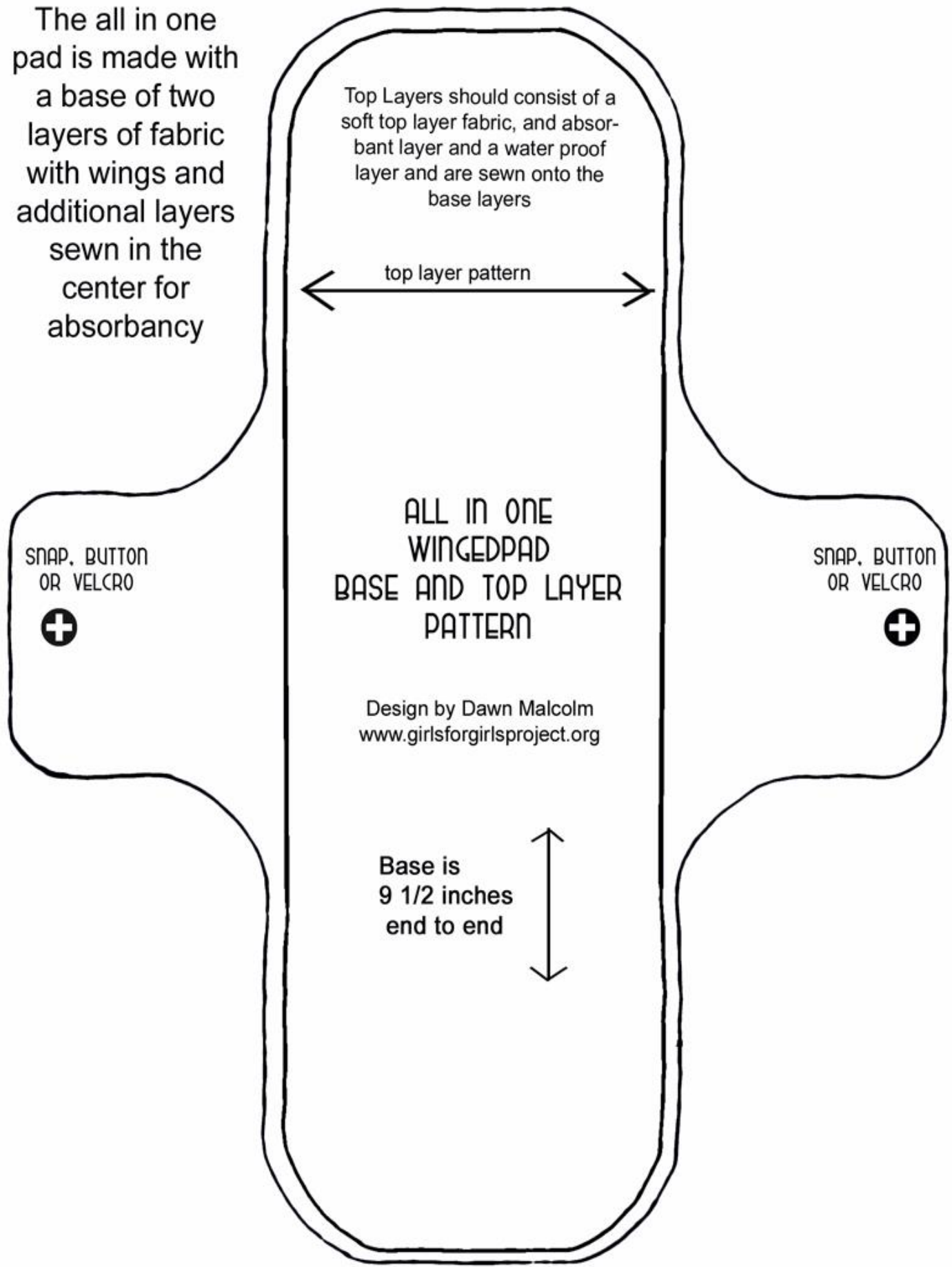
ALL IN ONE WINGEDPAD BASE AND TOP LAYER PATTERN

SNAP, BUTTON OR VELCRO
+

SNAP, BUTTON OR VELCRO
+

Design by Dawn Malcolm
www.girlsforgirlsproject.org

Base is 9 1/2 inches end to end
↑↓



winged pad base
should be made
of a top and
bottom layer of
fabric with a
center insert of
waterproof fabric

add a piece of fabric
on top which is
folded in half at each end
to form a pocket

fold

WINGED POCKET PAD BASE PATTERN

Design by Dawn Malcolm
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SNAP, BUTTON
OR VELCRO

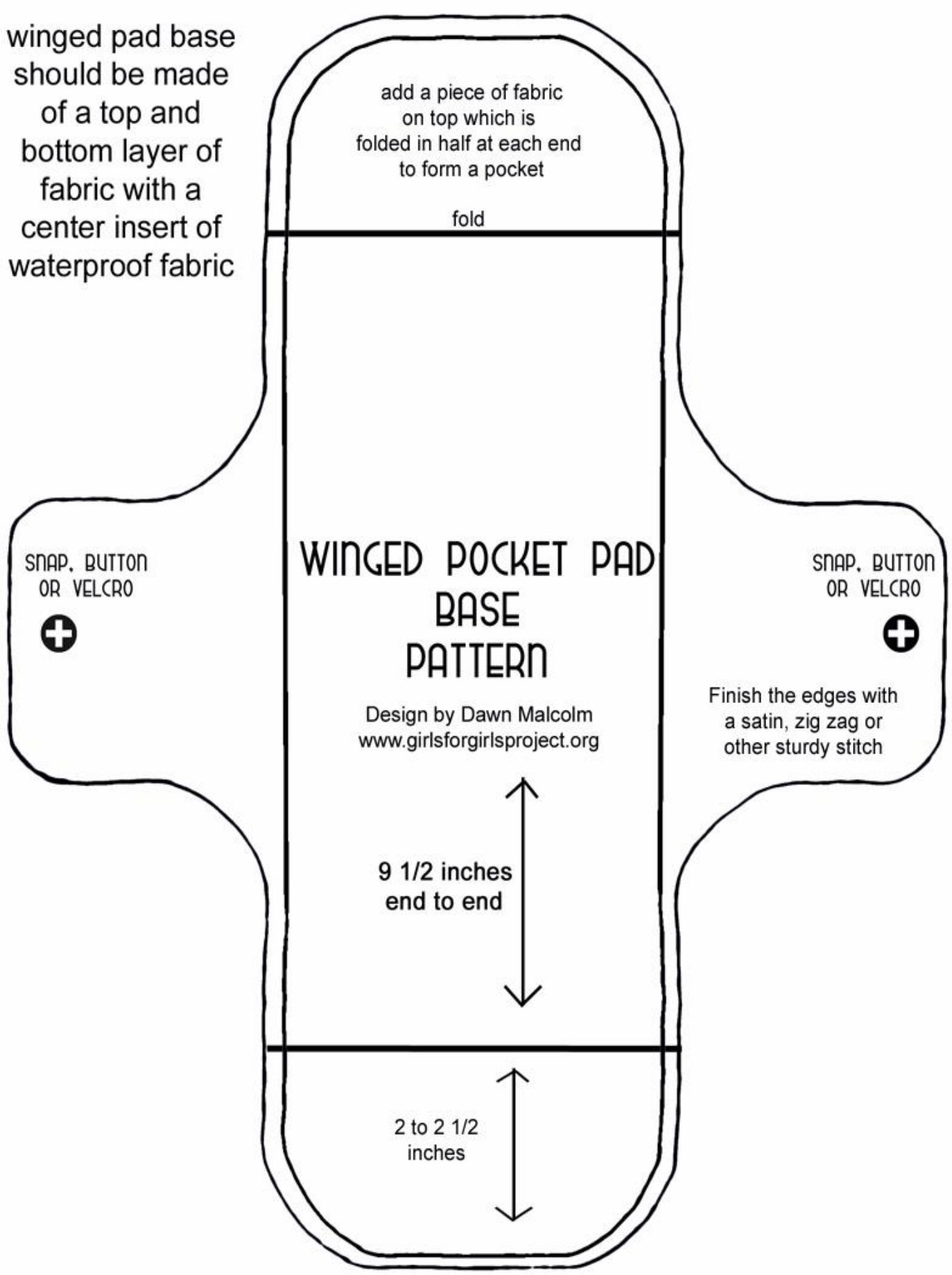


Finish the edges with
a satin, zig zag or
other sturdy stitch

9 1/2 inches
end to end

2 to 2 1/2
inches

SNAP, BUTTON
OR VELCRO



The Pocket pad insert consists of three layers of absorbant fabric.

Three layers of flannel type fabric or the middle layer consisting of terry cloth or a more absorbant type fabric.

stitch lines



POCKET PAD TRI FOLD INSERT PATTERN

Design by Dawn Malcolm
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This should be an 8 to 9 inch square with finished edges, The insert will be folded in thirds and tucked in the end pockets of the Pocket pad base.