

# Another Option for Nursing Mothers on the 1911 Kimono Dress

If you do not have a high bust point, I would recommend this excellent method created by customer Carol K. It works beautifully, as you will see in the photographs provided. My only additional recommendation is that if you want to maintain period authenticity, substitute snap panels for the invisible zippers (those weren't invented until the 1950s, and even conventional zippers didn't appear until 1913). Have fun! ~ Jennie Chancey

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This option involves putting a placket or invisible zippers into the top portion of each side of the overskirt. You will use two 9" zippers and will leave the lower portion of the overskirt open. Below are photographs of a dress made with this option. Note that the open side seams of the overskirt below the zippers are finished by hemming (Carol also added a beautiful trim to the sides of the completed dress, as you will see at the end). When you are ready to nurse, you simply unzip the sides (the zippers are upside-down and unzip in "reverse," going up toward the bodice). The overskirt provides you with a coverup for discreet nursing, and you can access a center slit or double slits in the underskirt. Instructions for creating this option are given below the photographs.



*Click for larger images.*

Unfinished nursing dress front and back.



*Click for larger images.*

Unfinished nursing dress side access.

On the left you see the skirt down and zipper closed.  
On the right the zipper is undone and the skirt is raised.

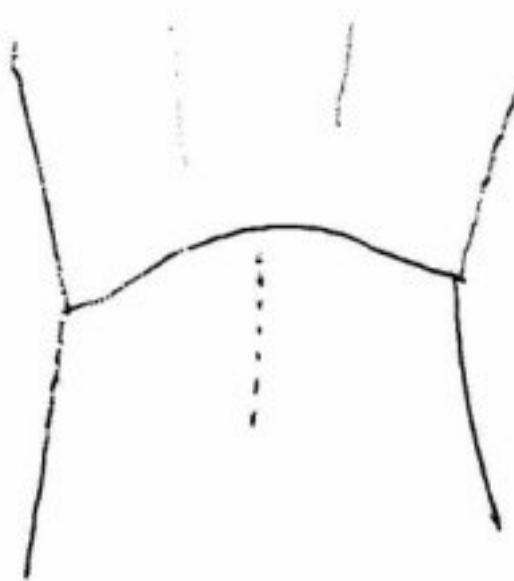
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## **Creating the Nursing Access**

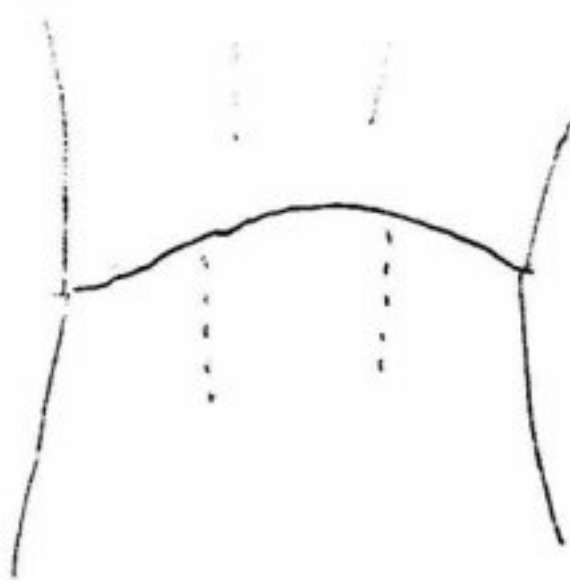
1. You will put together your bodice just as shown in the main pattern instructions. There will be no alterations to the bodice itself for this option.
2. When you reach the instructions for assembling your skirt layers, go ahead and follow the regular instructions for the underskirt. The overskirt is going to be different, since it will afford access to the nursing slit. Instead of sewing the side seams of the overskirt together, you will place invisible zippers or snap plackets at the top (9" zippers are long enough, and a nine-to-ten-inch placket will also suffice). Do note that you cannot use a sheer or thin material for your overskirt with this option if you want to hide your nursing access!
  - A. Pin the top 5/8" of the side seams together. This will help you to go ahead and anchor this area before adding your zipper or placket so that it doesn't end up going into the waistline seam.
  - B. Following the instructions provided with your invisible zippers (or at [THIS LINK](#)), install your zippers in the top of each overskirt side seam (with the zipper stop at the bottom of the

pinned area). When finished, the stop for each zipper will be at the top of the seam, and the pull will be nine inches below this once you have finished. If you are making a snap placket instead, simply follow the instructions given in Option I (in the original pattern instructions) to create that type of opening.

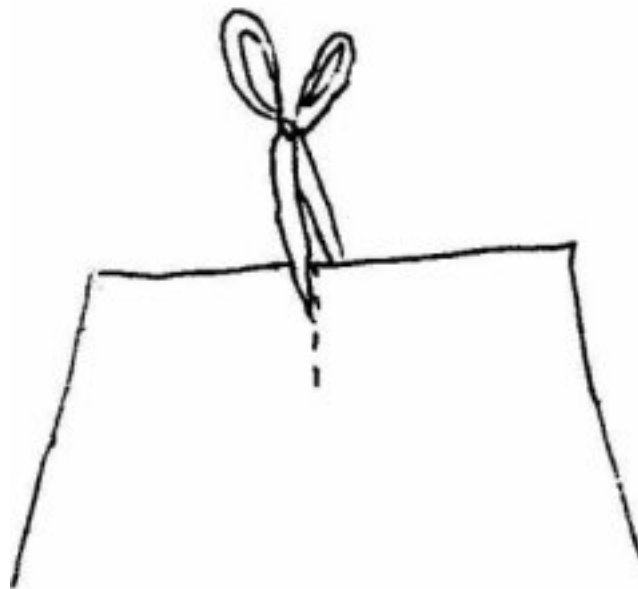
- C. Follow the instructions in the pattern to attach the bodice to the overskirt and underskirt. Once you have them neatly sewed and topstitched in place, try on your dress so that you can mark the placement of the nursing access slit(s). Unzip (or unsnap) the side openings of the overskirt and raise up the front to expose the underskirt beneath. If you decide to make one slit, mark it in the center of the underskirt, making sure it is large enough for adequate access:



If you choose to make two slits, mark them so they are evenly spaced and long enough for access:



- D. After you've marked your slit(s), remove the dress and cut the slit(s) open by folding the underskirt horizontally through the center of the mark and cutting as indicated. [**Important Note:** You can also skip to the next step prior to cutting if you plan to zigzag the raw edges. This is sometimes easier than trying to stitch close to the raw edge. Essentially, you'll just create a narrow zigzagged oval on the fabric, then cut the slit open. With a Serger, however, it may be better to cut the slit first, then finish the raw edge. Depends on the Serger, so experiment on some extra fabric first!]



- E. Finish the raw edges of your slit(s) by Serging or zigzagging around the opening or by using bias binding to enclose the raw

edges. Do be aware that bias tape is bulkier and may create a "shadow" you can see through the overskirt. Since the finished edge will remain hidden, you don't really need to worry about it being period correct, so I'd recommend Serging or zigzagging.

**TIP:** Once you've successfully created nursing access slits on your first dress, transfer the markings for them to your master pattern, and you'll already have them properly placed for your next dress!

F. Now it is time to finish the remaining raw edges of the overskirt side seams. Turn under each edge and hem it in place from the zipper all the way to the bottom, ironing everything neatly afterwards.

3. Finish your dress by hemming the overskirt (front and back panels) and the underskirt. When you're ready to nurse, you simply unsnap or unzip your side access vents, and you'll have a wonderful, built-in nursing coverup for your baby!

Here are pictures of Carol's completed nursing dress (without the belt):



*Click for larger images.*

Left to right: Front, Side, and Center.

Note the wonderful trim Carol used to give the dress a totally period feel.  
Very classy!



*Click for larger images.*

Here's a close-up of the trim on the side seams of the overskirt panels. The beautiful buttons hide the invisible zipper nicely.

This option makes for a simple, discreet nursing dress that you can enjoy whether or not you are currently nursing. It also prevents any accidental opening of an upper snap closure. If you have a high bust point, I'd recommend Option I, but if you are well endowed or have a low bust point, Option II is going to be your best bet.

***Happy Sewing!***



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