

Neck Coolers Instructions

- *To speed up, make two larger pockets, double amount of crystals per pocket*
- *If you use a serger, you do not have to turn the cooler to insert crystals*
- *Note: www.watersorb.com crystals take half the amount of the Magic Crystals.*

Materials:

"Magic Crystals" - which are the watering crystals you put in the soil of your potted plants. They swell (alot) with water and then give it off slowly to the plants, or to a hot neck in our case. I found them at the very big national chain: W-M. They can be found in the garden department and the ones I got were called "Moisture Plus".....and put out by a company with the same name as the German sergeant in the old tv show Hogan's Heroes. One jar will make MANY neck-coolers....costs about \$7-8 as I remember.)

Material and matching thread – Troops in Iraq and Kuwait are wearing desert cammo; troops in Afghanistan are wearing green cammo. I found green cammo material at the same chain store. I didn't find desert cammo, but did find a material that suited. (I bought 44" wide material because it was a good length for around the neck.) Use cotton or cotton poly.

Directions:

Slice up whatever amount of material you've got into 3 1/2" strips (by 44"). Fold lengthwise, good sides together, and sew together, leaving one end open and tapering the other end to a point. Turn the sewed strip inside out so that you have the good side visible. Now you will make pockets for the crystals. Sew a line widthwise about 14" from the tapered end. Pour into the open end 1/4 tsp of crystals and make sure that they slide down to your sewed line. Measure 4" and sew another line widthwise, making that first pocket about 4" long. Do this 3 more times until you have four pockets filled with crystals. Now just sew up the open end, and you've got a SUPER-DOOPER NECK-COOLER.....

One note of caution: You may be tempted to add more crystals to each pocket, thinking that more is better. However, these crystals swell ALOT, and packing them too tightly will leave your soldier with something that won't bend enough to go around his/her neck. (1/8 tsp swelled to about 1/3 cup of gelatinous balls for me.) You might decide to make your neck-coolers a bit wider and that's fine, but remember that many of our soldiers are wearing kevlar and flak jackets. This does not leave much room around the neck....better perhaps to let them wear two if two fit rather than send one that is too big and makes them uncomfortable.

OK, that's it.....all the soldiers have to do is soak the collars in water for a few minutes until they swell and then tie them on....(first soaking might take five minutes or more).....The crystals eventually wear out and will not absorb as much water. However, they should last a month or two.....

Beware: Escaped crystals are slippery when wet!! Sweep up or don't spill!!

Serger Instructions:

1. Cut 3 1/2" fabric strips. Fold them wrong sides together. Mark the center and stitch the lines for the pockets. FOUR 4" pockets requires 5 stitching lines. TWO 8" pockets requires 3 stitching lines.
2. Insert the crystals in the pockets, pushing them to the folded section of the fabric.
 - Magic Crystals: 1/4 tsp for 4" pockets, 1/2 tsp for 8" pocket.
 - Watersorb crystals: 1/8 tsp for 4" pocket, 1/4 tsp. for 8" pocket.
3. Pin and serge around the tips and the long edge.
4. This is a lot quicker.

Other Hints:

1. Shultz Moisture Plus Watering Crystals are found at Wal Mart in the gardening section. These work fine and come in 12 oz. containers. One bottle will do 84 coolers. Those from Watersorb (www.watersorb.com) are excellent but sold in larger quantities and take fewer crystals. The smallest amount was 2# and could do 250 at least.
2. Schultz Crystals takes ¼ teaspoon per 4" pocket. Watersorb takes 1/8 teaspoon. If you do larger pockets, you would have to estimate the increase in the amount of crystals. *8" pocket would take ½ tsp Shultz crystal and ¼ tsp Watersorb.
3. An all purpose funnel with a long spout makes it easy to put the crystals in the fabric slot. Wal Mart and Dollar Stores have them for \$1.
4. It takes about 30 minutes to do one neck cooler using this pattern and turning the tube of fabric. If you use a serger, you do not have to turn the fabric and it is even quicker.
5. Assembly lines work great if a group wants to get together to make the neck coolers. You can save time but precutting the fabric and using a serger.
6. Best to use 45" fabric. Wal Mart had a khaki or beige color, 45" poly and cotton for \$1.87 a yard. Looks good. All cotton is good, you may have to iron after prewashing. You do not have to pre-wash.
7. You don't have to prewash your fabric but it does get the chemicals out. There is an advantage to using poly-cotton as it dries well.
8. You can use colors that go with the desert camouflage uniform – grey, sand, brown, tan, or desert camo colors. No flowers or other colors.
9. The largest width you should work with is 4". Any larger could be a problem for the soliders to get their neck coolers under their kevolar vest. 3 ½" is the smallest width for the strip and good if you are using a serger.
10. When sewing up the long edge, you can also sew up one tip so the fabric tube is easier to turn. After you have turned the tube inside out, you can trim it off and serge or zig-zag. This is quicker.
11. The tips can be straight across or cut at an angle. Both will work.
12. If you are sewing them individually, it might be more efficient to form your own assembly process. Cut them all out. Then do each step one at a time, doing all of the coolers at one time before moving onto the next step.
13. CAUTION ABOUT CRYSTALS - they can be a problem if dropped on a rug. They can get moist and slippery. So, you might do crystals in a "safe" place or vacuum each time you use them.
14. **Do not use more than the suggested amount of crystals.** They swell tremendously. Soak one in water and see what happens. These really work.
15. Fabric amount (45" wide):
One yard – 4" strips = 8 coolers
One yard – 3 ½ " strips = 10 coolers
16. These crystals will last about three months. So, don't worry about making a sewing masterpiece, just get them together so they can be sent. Our motto is – Production, not Perfection!
17. The finished strip is from 1 ½ " to no more than 2". This looks small but is correct.
18. We fold the coolers and place them in 1 gallon zip lock baggies along with the Neck Cooler-Nature's Air Conditioning insert. We include a letter as needed.

Neck Cooler ASSEMBLY LINE Instructions (two pockets) USING SERGERS

- 1) **CUT FABRIC** – we cut our strips 3 6/8 inches or 4 inches. If you use a roller knife or rotary cutter, the cutting goes very fast. Otherwise you will want to have a good amount precut so people can begin to sew as soon as possible.
- 2) **MARK FABRIC** – We marked the fabric with the three lines the sewers would sew on. This made it much quicker for them. We used a sewing cut-out board that has grid lines, and marked the lines we needed to draw, thus we could place the fabric strip on the lines and quickly draw with a ruler.
- 3) **PRESS STRIPS** – We had one person fold the strips and press them with the crease. This greatly speeded up the sewers.
- 4) **SEW LINES** – The sewers stitched the three lines on the fabric strip, right sides out. Some found it faster to stitch one line on one, then feed the next one on the same line, and do ten in a row. Then they would do the second line the same, and all the lines that way. Then they would cut them apart.
- 5) **INSERT CRYSTALS** – We put the crystals in a big plastic container so we could scoop the crystals easily without spilling them. However, you will spill crystals in the serging process, so be sitting in one section where you can clean up good. Insert the crystals in each pocket, line the strips up where the sergers can reach them. We also had the insert person fold up the fabric strip in accordion folds and hand to the serger person. Also, our serger persons would pull the strip towards themselves, folding as they go. One crystal stuffer and folder could keep up with one serger. If the serger person folds, one crystal person could handle two sergers. It is quicker if the crystal person folds and hands to serger.
- 6) **TRIM THREADS** – After serging, we trimmed all the threads. You must be careful to pull the serger threads at the tips until they lock and then trim. This will keep them from raveling.
- 7) **FOLD AND STACK** – We folded the coolers in thirds, stacked them in groups of 5, and then put bunches of 25 together. This meant we did not have to count and recount.
- 8) **PUT IN BAGGIES WITH OSOT INSERT** – We used one gallon zip lock baggies. We put one folded cooler and one OSOT insert (“NECK COOLERS-NATURE’S AIR CONDITIONING”). We squeezed the air out as we sealed them, VERY IMPORTANT. We laid 25 “baggied” coolers alternately so they would remain flatter. Then we straightened them up a little, creased them in the center with our hands, folded all 25 over together, and put a big rubber band on each end to secure them. Thus, we had bunches of 25 ready to go. This really helped to have them this way to put in mailers or boxes. We were able to mail 25 in large padded envelopes and they would do fine in boxes.
- 9) **ON OUR BEST DAY** – With 6 to 7 people, we averaged 25-30 coolers an hour. We usually worked for 6 hours with a lunch break. This involved 7+ people, 4 machines and 2 sergers.

NECK COOLERS-NATURE'S AIR CONDITIONING

Lovingly sewn by the caring folk of Operation Support Our Troops (OSOT)

Instructions for use:

There are “magic crystals” sewn into the four “pockets” of each neck cooler. In order to use your cooler, soak the whole thing in water until the crystals in the four pockets expand and the pockets bulge. The first soaking may take as long as ten minutes before the crystals absorb as much water as they are capable of. You can then tie the neck cooler around your neck...the crystals will slowly give up their absorbed water and the evaporation of the water should cool you for hours. The neck cooler can be re-soaked and used again and again .It should last about two months before the crystals lose their ability to absorb water.

We know of no negative skin reactions to the “magic crystals”, even with long term use. However, should you develop any skin problems. Discontinue use.

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