

Special bra helps sufferers

BY MARC LALONDE
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A Beaconsfield couple has invented a bra that will make life easier for the million-plus Canadian women suffering from arthritis.

BEACONSFIELD

Francine Lonn said she came up with the Eezee Bra for arthritic women who have problems dressing themselves because they suffer from swollen and stiff joints.

"There are over a million women in Canada who have problems with arthritis and have problems putting clothes on in the morning, especially having to struggle with tiny hooks and eyes on the back of their bras," said Lonn.

She and husband Harvey run Harlon Canada Inc., a clothing company based in Cornwall, Ont.

The bra is tied in the front using only two fingers and the palm of the hand. Two hooks, like the ones used to attach men's pants, and a velcro attachment allow the bra to be attached with a minimum of effort, she said.

"I came up with the idea because I was afraid one day I would get arthritis and I wouldn't be able to dress myself. It's a matter of dignity," Lonn said.

She told the story of an arthritic woman who hadn't been able to do up her own bra for 10 years, depending instead on her husband for help.

"She called me because she saw an ad for the bra and it had been a decade since she was able to put on and take off her own bra, because her fingers had become twisted with arthritis. She came out of the dressing room with tears in her eyes and said 'Thank you — you're never going to know what you did for me,'" Lonn said.

The bra is now available in the West Island after having been available in the United States for some months, said Harvey Lonn. For some women, it might be the bra solution they need.

"Certain retailers focus on fashion-based trends, so if a woman buys a bra at a store, and really likes it, she might not be able to get that same bra, because retailers turn stock over quickly. We think women will be very comfortable with this bra," he said, adding he thinks women over 35 will benefit the most from the new product.

"It's definitely a product for baby-boomers, but women with torn rotator cuffs, shoulder injuries, arm injuries, anything that, for some reason, would affect a woman's ability to get herself ready in the morning," Lonn continued.

Arthritis West Island Self-Help Association president Beverly Colbeck said over two million Canadian women are afflicted with the kind of arthritis that would make a bra like Lonn's a necessity.

"Certainly a woman with rheumatoid arthritis, for instance, will also have a lot of problems with arms and shoulders, and with the movements associated with putting on a bra," Colbeck said, adding the onset of rheumatoid arthritis in women is earlier than

"The disease hits in the late 20s and 30s sometimes," said Colbeck. "It comes quickly and affects the whole body. Day-to-day tasks can be affected severely," she said.

The Eezee Bra is available locally at Jean Coutu pharmacy, 4894 Sources Blvd. in Dollard des Ormeaux.