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Wednesday, Oct. 24, 2007

New baby clothing line tells it like it is

Advice could come in handy during flu season
by Patricia M. Murrett | Staff Writer

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Parents who find it hard to tell well-meaning strangers to keep their germ-y mitts off their darling babies now have a clothing line to help and a Damascus woman to thank.

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“There are so many germs you can get just by dirty hands,” said Vonetta Christian-Williams, 31, who has three sons, including a 4-month-old who inspired her trademarked creation, Wordsies. “Babies just aren’t able to fight as many things that we might be able to fight.”

Her new line, for sale at www.wordsies.com, offers eight small shirts and onesies that could come in handy during flu season.

Embroidered and screen-printed sayings send messages such as “Look, but don’t touch,” “Wash your hands first,” “Please don’t kiss my Lips,” “My lips are for my Mommy,” and “Got clean hands?”

While a few say “I’m a biracial cutie,” “Please don’t compare me to your baby” and “Please don’t smoke near me,” most have germ-related messages.

“To me, it’s just a great idea,” said Sheresa Fairclough Days, 31, of West Palm Beach, Fla., who bought “Look, but don’t touch” shirts for her 1-year-old niece and nephew online after she received forwarded e-mail messages about the new line. “Whenever we go out, people are always wanting to touch and kiss them,” she said. “There is always this uncomfortable silence when people come up to them and stroke their face or hold their hands and want to touch and pick them up.”

Christian-Williams, a technical writer at the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission in Gaithersburg, came up with the idea when she was seven months pregnant and looking for a way to tell her husband’s family to clean up.

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“I tried to come up with a way to politely tell his family to wash their hands — I’m just a germphobe,” Christian-Williams said. “So I said: ‘I’m just going to put it on his shirt when he



Brian Lewis/The Gazette
Brelon Williams, 4 months old, models one of the Wordsies his mom has trademarked that warns strangers to keep their germ-y hands to themselves.



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Hand-washing is the most important step people can take to keep from getting sick and spreading illness, according to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

When Christian-Williams shared her idea with her husband, Anthony Williams, who works in research and development, he laughed.

“And he said, ‘If you’re going to put that on a shirt, then you have to make one that says: ‘Don’t kiss my lips,’ because I do that to my older son,” Christian-Williams said.

Then the family started thinking that Christian-Williams could be on to something. She bought the little cotton shirts and bodysuits, which sell for \$18 and \$20 in short- and long-sleeved versions. Classic Embroidery in Olde Towne Gaithersburg does the stitching and screenwork.

Now Christian-Williams will sew 5,000 “Wordsies” tags onto the clothing to bring her \$20,000 investment to fruition.

She has a good feeling about her product. She said she wasn’t impressed with the competition she found on Web sites and in boutiques.

“A lot of these T-shirts I came across didn’t say diddly-squat,” she said last week, citing \$29 baby shirts that said “I am a princess,” or stated the obvious: “I poop.”

“That doesn’t say anything to me,” Christian-Williams said. “I wanted my shirts to actually say something.”

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