

Harp's fashion experts:

What's underneath is as important as the dress itself

What a bride wears under her wedding dress is almost as important as the gown itself, according to most fashion experts.

"The dress can be as beautiful as it can possibly be, but if you don't have the right undergarment underneath, it will not look good," said Lisa Hamill of Harp's

Lingerie. "The undergarment can either make or break the dress."

Brides want to look as beautiful as possible on their wedding day and that's why it's important to wear undergarments that provide necessary lift and support.

For the best selection, brides, bridesmaids and the mothers of the bride and groom should consider shopping at Harp's Lingerie in Birmingham. The store stocks a variety of sizes, including the average size, which surprisingly isn't 34B, but rather 36DD.

The store offers a large selection of stocked shape wear in sizes all the way up to an H cup, which is nearly impossible to find in a strapless, Hamill said.

A fitting is especially important for a bride or bridal party, because everyday bra size usually differs from size



in shapewear.

"Even though you think you're a certain size, most likely you'll wear something different in a bustier or corset," Hamill said.

The staff at Harp's also help determine the best corset, bustier or strapless undergarment based on the dress style. Hamill suggests brides the day of the fitting bring a photo of the gown or the dress itself. Not only will staff help the bride and bridal party find the undergarments that fit, they'll also make sure it's comfortable.

"They have to dance in this. They have to sit in this. They will wear it all day and night long and that's a long period of time. It's got to be somewhat comfortable," Hamill said. "If you're wearing the wrong bra, you're going to be very uncomfortable."

If the gown has a built-in

bra or if the bride doesn't need an undergarment, Hamill said the staff at Harp's will tell brides they're fine.

"We don't just sell you something," she said. "We're the experts. We know exactly what you need without wasting any time and most brides see Harp's at some point."

No appointment is necessary at Harp's, but

brides should make sure they visit at the right time according to their wedding plans. Hamill said it's best to have the dress first and most brides should visit one to two months prior to the wedding date. She advised against shopping for undergarments any sooner because brides typically lose weight.

Women have been coming to Harp's for their lingerie for decades. The store marked its 70th anniversary in August and continues to flourish.

"There are just some things you shouldn't buy on the internet, a bra being one of them," Hamill said.

In 1947, Elizabeth Harp and her husband, Elouise, opened their store on Chene Street in Detroit with \$500 in borrowed cash and a clear vision of where they wanted to go, according to the Harp's website.

Harp, or "Betty" to her friends, had a sense of style and an ability to help women feel beautiful. She worked at her store six days a week until she died in 2010 at the age of 94. Hamill is Harp's granddaughter.

Today, women can buy bras, shapewear, loungewear, bridal lingerie, accessories and more.

Harp's is located at 265 S. Old Woodward, Birmingham. Call (248) 642-2555 or visit harps-lingerie.com.

