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(54) **INTERLABIAL PAD PACKAGING**

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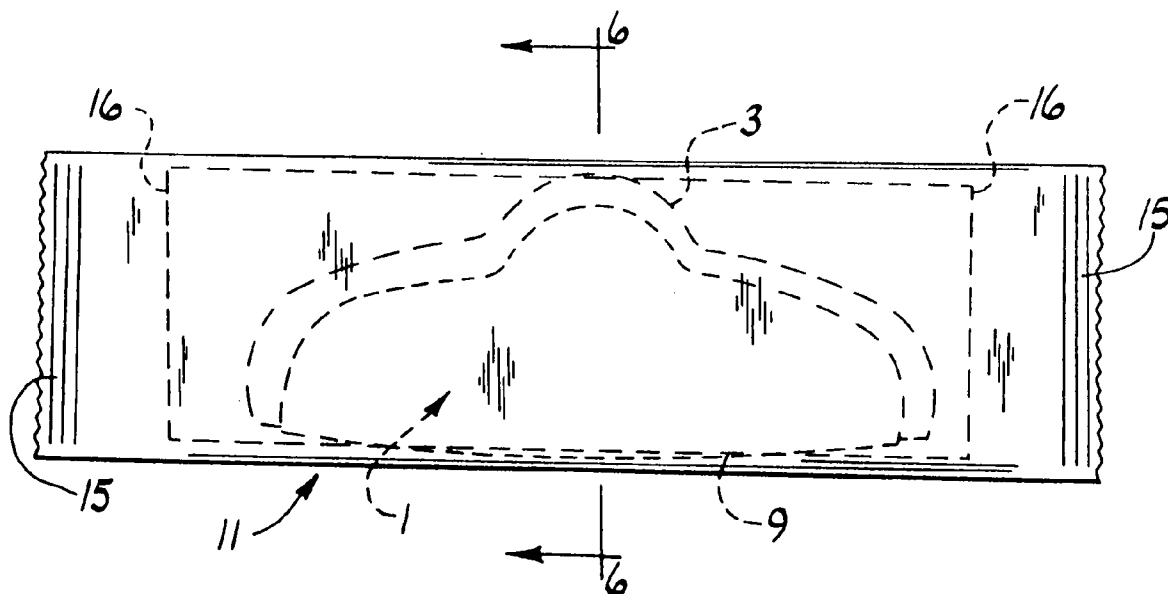
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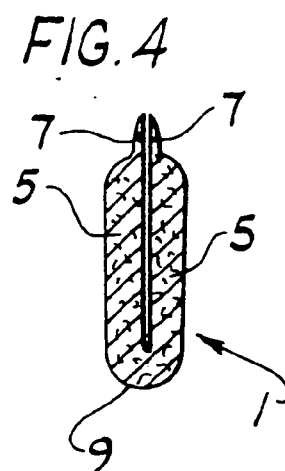
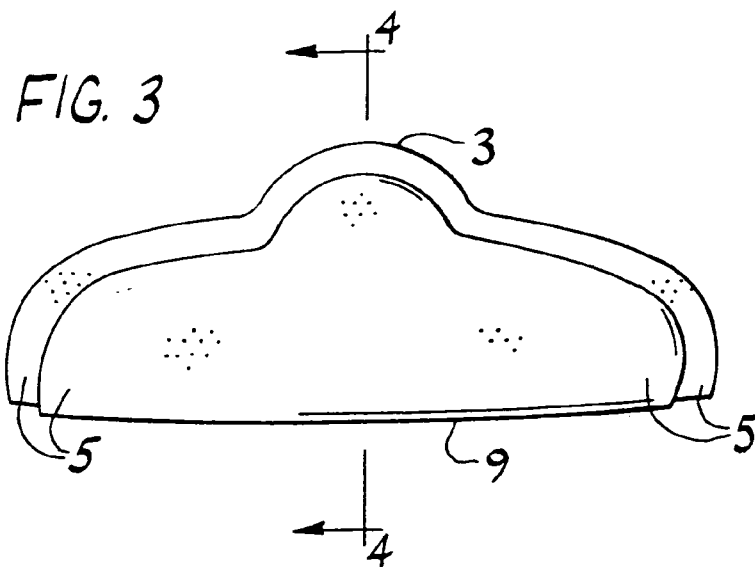
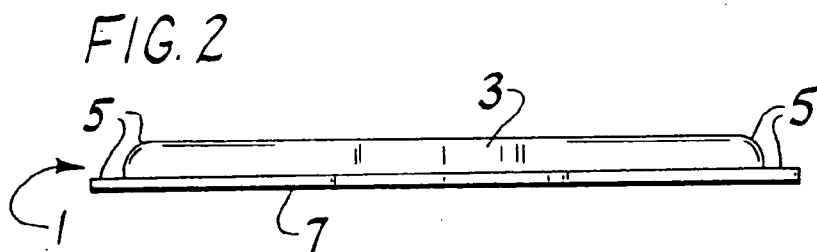
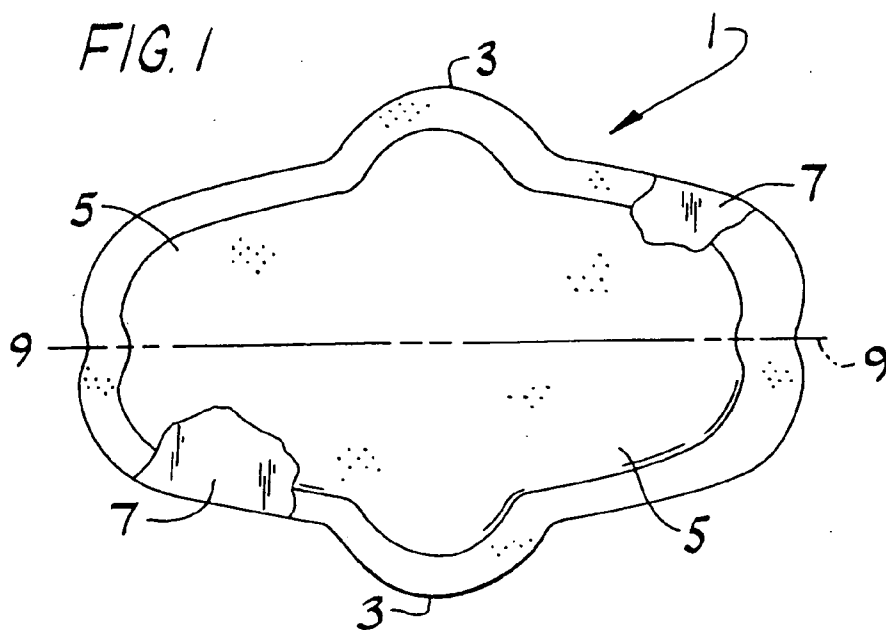
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

(21) Appl. No.: **10/761,042**

A package of individually packaged interlabial pads.





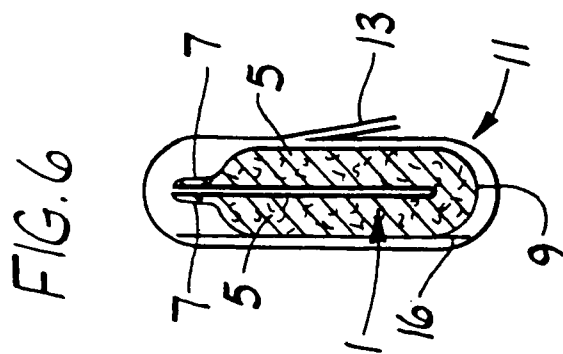
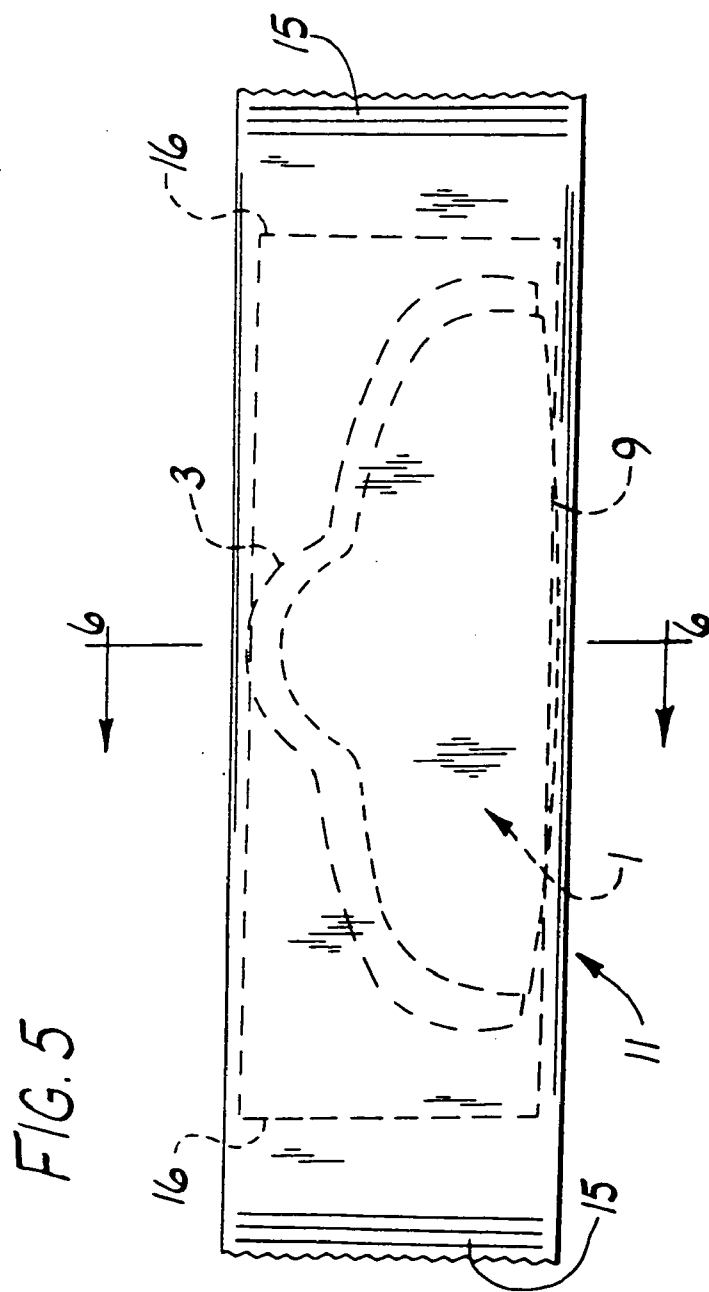


FIG. 7

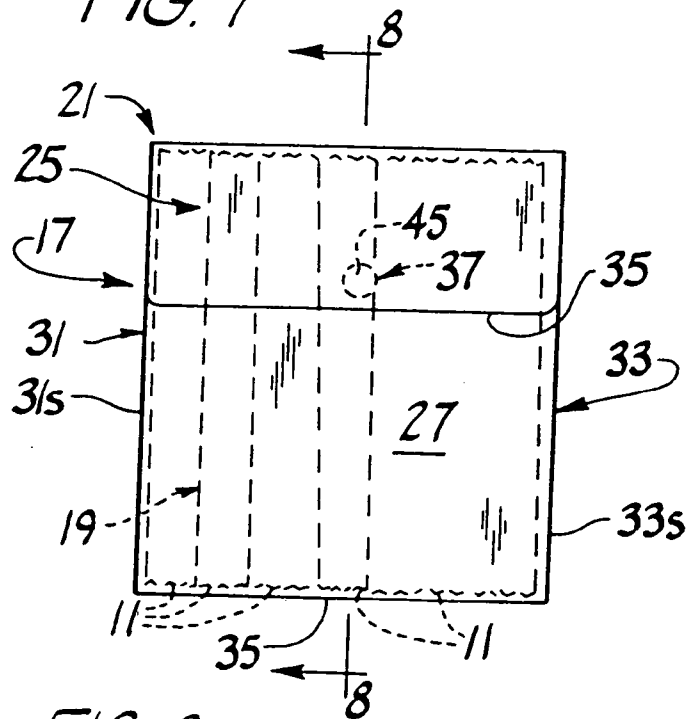


FIG. 8

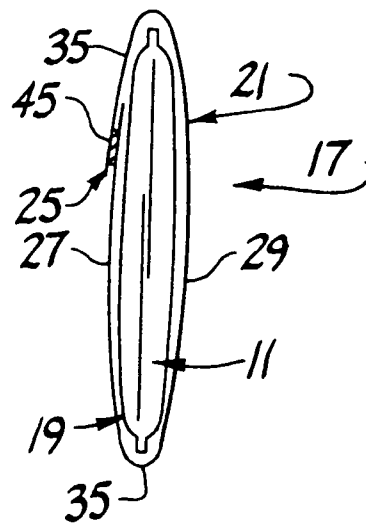


FIG. 9

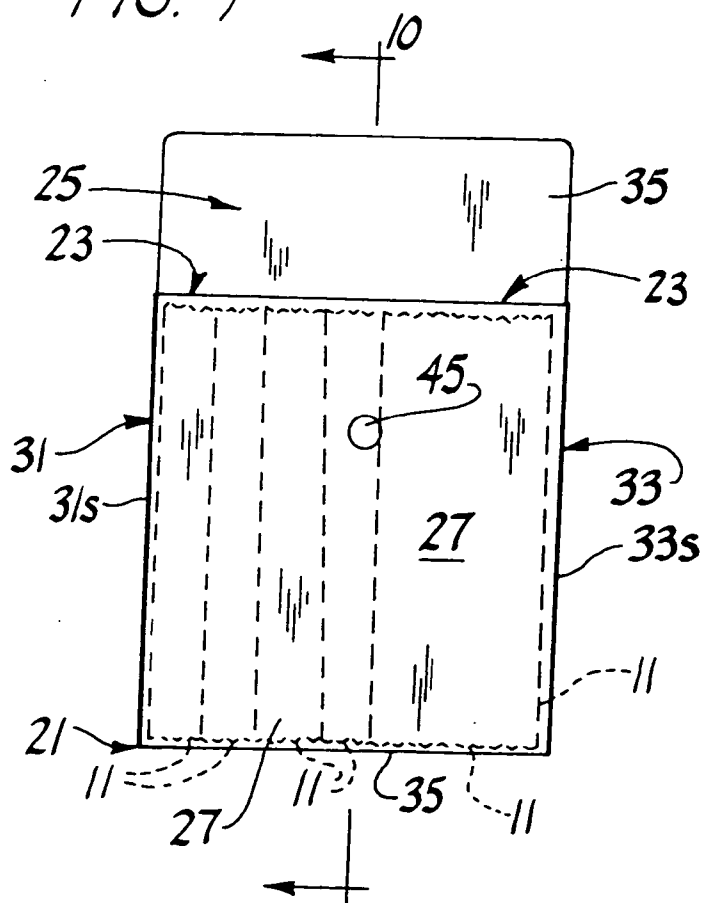
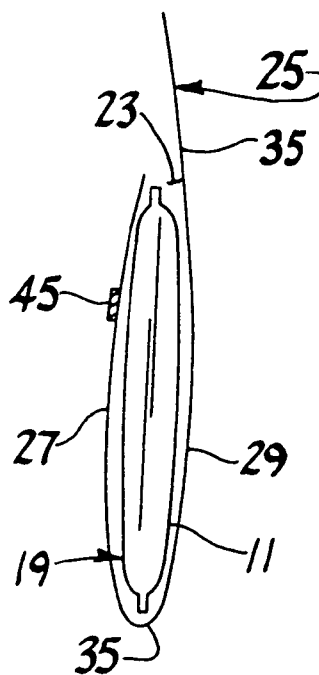
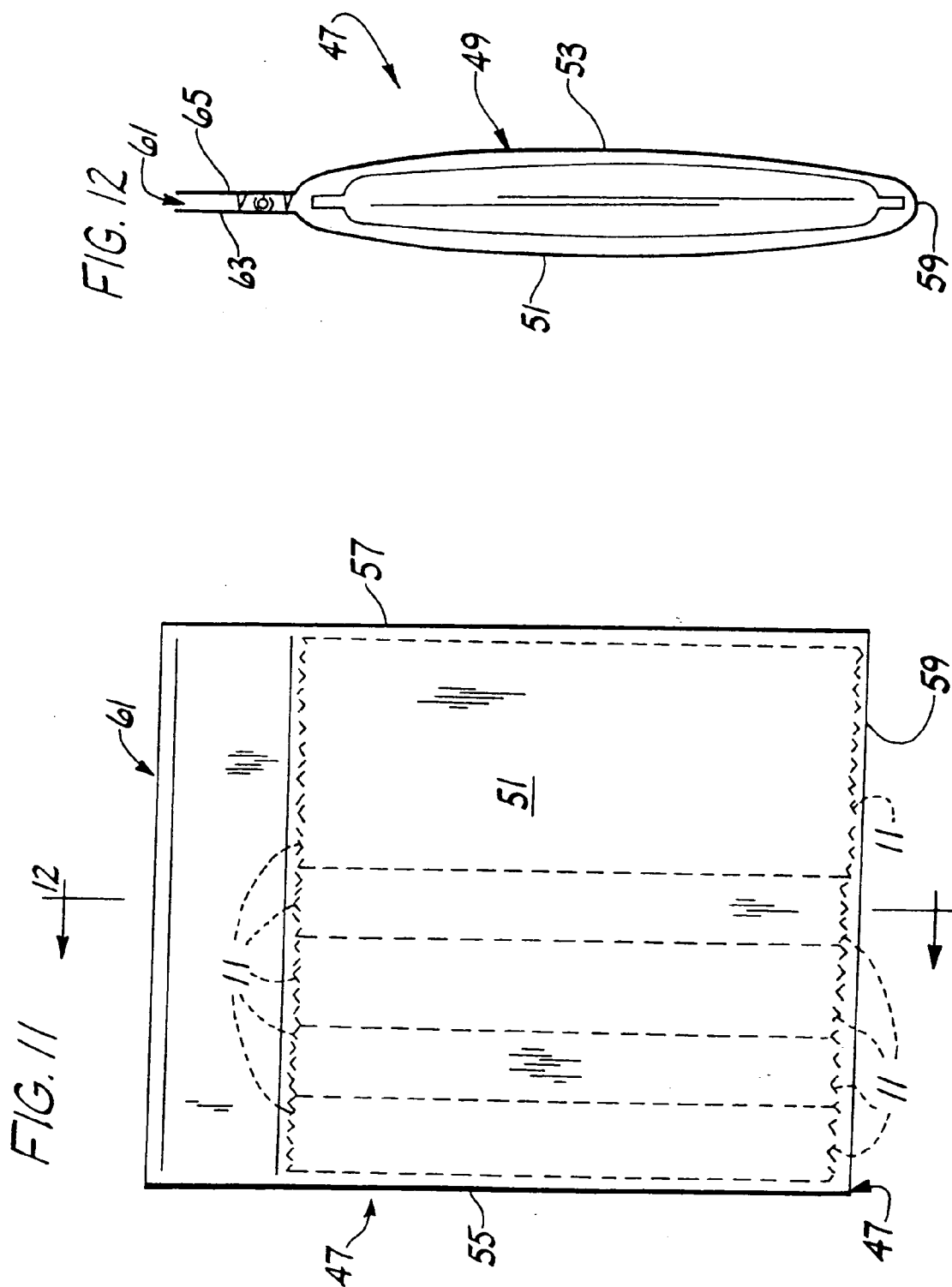
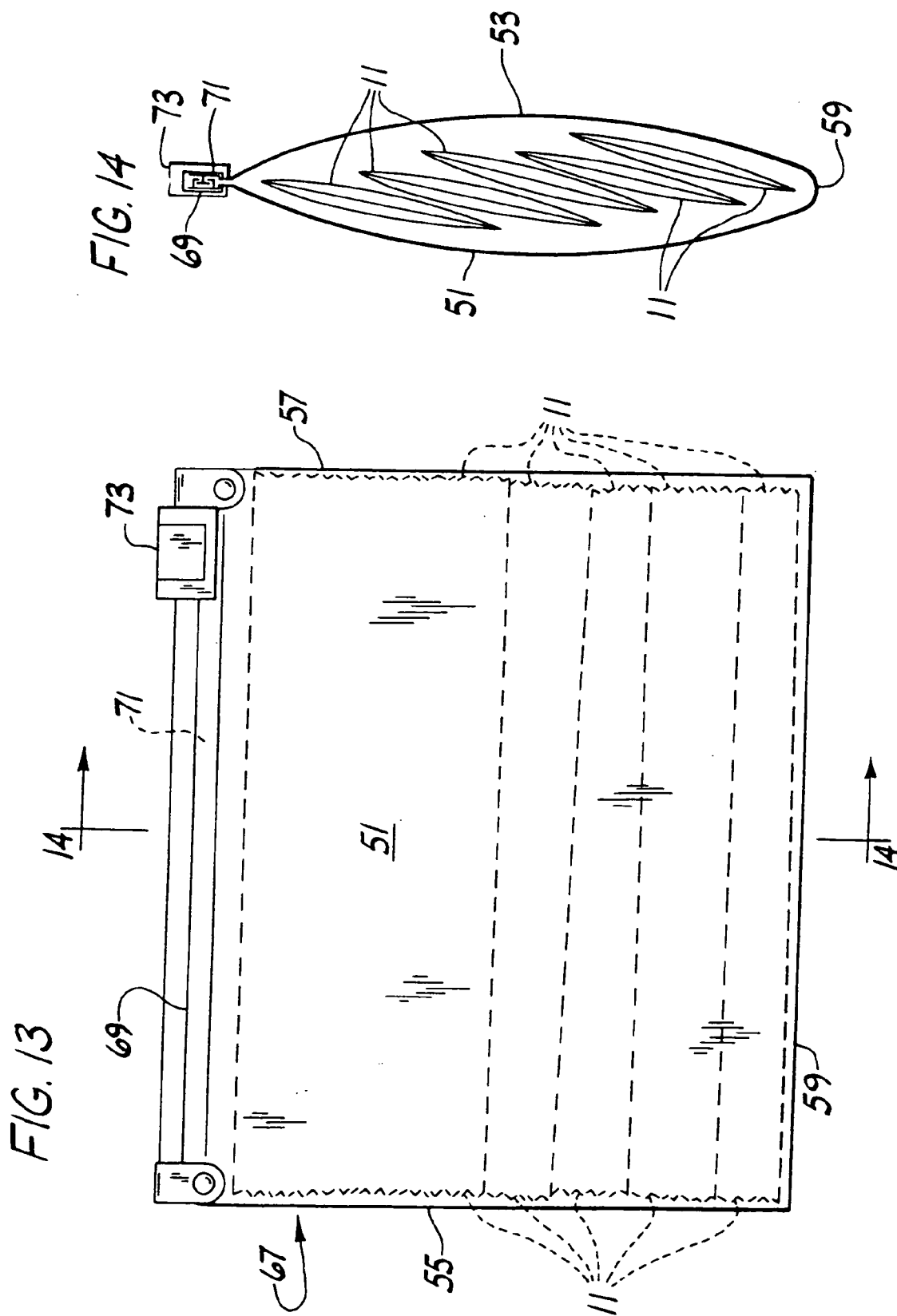
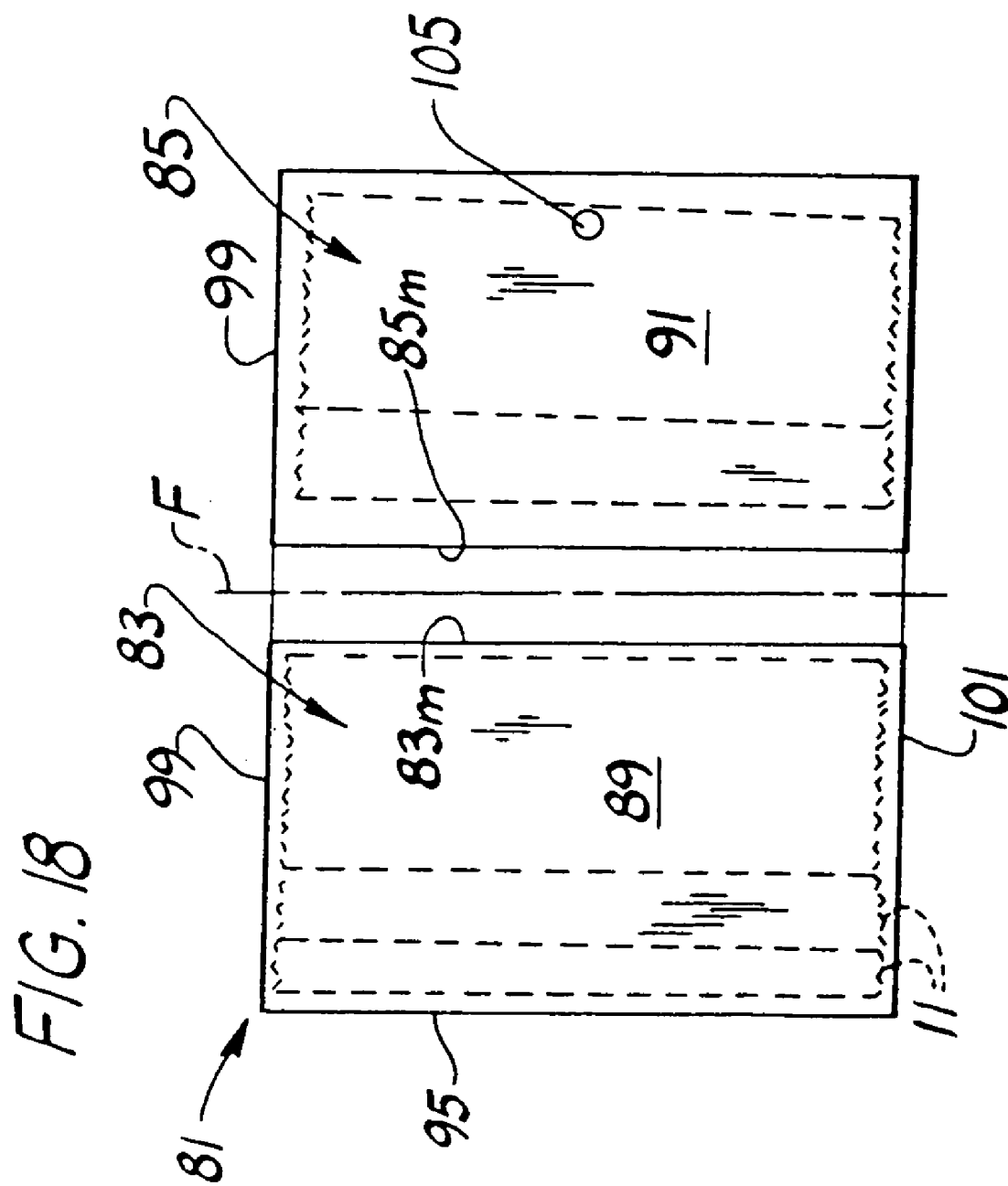


FIG. 10









INTERLABIAL PAD PACKAGING

CROSS-REFERENCES TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application is a divisional of U.S. application Ser. No. 10/043,895, filed Nov. 9, 2001. The foregoing application is incorporated herein by reference in their entirety.

BACKGROUND OF INVENTION

[0002] This invention relates generally to a package, and more particularly to interlabial pad packaging.

[0003] The invention concerns the packaging of interlabial pads of the type shown in U.S. Pat. No. 4,595,392 issued Jun. 17, 1986, entitled "Interlabial Pad", and U.S. Pat. No. 4,673,403 issued Jun. 16, 1987, entitled "Method and Pad Allowing Improved Placement of Catamenial Device". In addition, the invention is applicable to the packaging of other interlabial pads.

[0004] Interlabial pads like other absorbent feminine care products (e.g., tampons, panty liners and feminine napkins) are intended to be carried about in purses, backpacks and briefcases until needed. Unfortunately, these containers do not always provide a hygienic environment for the pads, and thus the pads can become dirty and/or damaged. Further, the pads can become scattered about in the containers so they are difficult to find when needed. Although packages have been developed to hold other absorbent feminine care products (e.g., the packages described in co-pending U.S. patent application Ser. Nos. 09/713,604, 09/713,496, 09/713,565, 09/713,497, and 09/713,596, all of which were filed on Nov. 15, 2000, and are hereby incorporated by reference; and application Ser. Nos. 09/917,540, and 09/916,795, both of which were filed on Jul. 27, 2001, and are hereby incorporated by reference), there is a need for packaging for interlabial pads.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0005] In general, the invention comprises a package of interlabial pads for carrying a supply of the pads in hygienic condition in such manner as to maintain them in hygienic condition and to be readily available for use in hygienic condition when needed. The package comprises a receptacle and a supply of pads in the receptacle. The receptacle has an opening through which a pad may be withdrawn for use when needed. Further, the receptacle has a reclosable closure for closing the opening. The closure is closed for carrying the pads in hygienic condition and for continued carrying in hygienic condition of the pads remaining in the receptacle after withdrawal of a pad.

[0006] Other features will be in part apparent and in part pointed out hereinafter.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0007] FIG. 1 is a plan view of an interlabial pad such as may be packaged in accordance with this invention, partly broken away to show detail;

[0008] FIG. 2 is a edge view of the interlabial pad;

[0009] FIG. 3 is a plan view showing the pad folded;

[0010] FIG. 4 is a section taken in the plane of line 4-4 of FIG. 3;

[0011] FIG. 5 is a front elevation of hygienic packaging containing the folded pad;

[0012] FIG. 6 is a section taken in the plane of line 6-6 of FIG. 5;

[0013] FIG. 7 is a front elevation of a package of a first embodiment of the present invention in a closed condition, the packaged pads therein shown in dashed lines;

[0014] FIG. 8 is a section taken in the plane of line 8-8 of FIG. 7;

[0015] FIG. 9 is a front elevation of the package of FIG. 7 in an opened condition;

[0016] FIG. 8 is a section taken in the plane of line 8-8 of FIG. 7;

[0017] FIG. 9 is a front elevation of the package of FIG. 7 in an opened condition;

[0018] FIG. 10 is a section taken in the plane of line 10-10 of FIG. 9;

[0019] FIG. 11 is a front elevation of a package of a second embodiment of the present invention, the packaged pads therein shown in dashed lines;

[0020] FIG. 12 is a section taken in the plane of line 12-12 of FIG. 11;

[0021] FIG. 13 is a front elevation of a package of a third embodiment of the present invention, the packaged pads therein shown in dashed lines;

[0022] FIG. 14 is a section taken in the plane of line 14-14 of FIG. 13;

[0023] FIG. 15 is a front elevation of a package of a fourth embodiment of the present invention in an opened condition, the packaged pads therein shown in dashed lines;

[0024] FIG. 16 is a section taken in the plane of line 16-16 of FIG. 15;

[0025] FIG. 17 is a front elevation of the package of FIG. 15 in an opened condition; and

[0026] FIG. 18 is a front elevation of a package of a fifth embodiment of the present invention in an opened condition, the packaged pads therein shown in dashed lines.

[0027] In the above-noted sectional views, film is depicted in single-line style rather than in exaggerated thickness with cross-hatching.

[0028] Corresponding reference characters indicate corresponding parts throughout the several views of the drawings.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0029] Referring to FIGS. 1 and 2 of the drawings, an interlabial pad is designated in its entirety by the reference number 1. The pad 1, which is exemplary of interlabial pads that may be packaged in accordance with this invention, is generally of the type disclosed in the aforesaid U.S. Pat. Nos. 4,595,392 and 4,673,403, which are hereby incorporated by reference. In one embodiment, the pad 1 is generally oval and has lateral projections 3. Although the pad 1 may have other dimensions without departing from the

scope of the present invention, in one embodiment the pad has an overall width of about 3.4 centimeters (cm) and an overall length of between about 6 cm and about 10 cm. As those skilled in the art will appreciate, the interlabial pad may have other shapes without departing from the scope of the present invention. Although the pad **1** of one embodiment comprises a lamination of a layer **5** of absorbent material on a fluid impervious layer **7** (e.g., plastic film), pads having other configurations including those without an impervious layer are also contemplated. As shown in **FIGS. 3 and 4**, in one embodiment the pad **1** is folded in half on its major axis as indicated at **9** and, as shown in **FIGS. 5 and 6**, is individually packaged in an elongate, generally flat sealed hygienic package **11** having a longitudinal seam **13** and end seals **15**. In alternative embodiments, it is envisioned that the package **11** may not be sealed or may be omitted entirely. Further, it is envisioned that the pad **1** may be unfolded without departing from the scope of the present invention. Although the package **11** may be made of other materials without departing from the scope of the present invention, in one embodiment the package is made of heat-sealable plastic film and in another embodiment the package is made of paper. The seam **13** and seals **15** may be made by any conventional process such as heat sealing, mechanical sealing or adhesive bonding. Further, it is envisioned that the pad **1** may be sealed in the package **11** with a cardboard backing **16**. Although the package **11** may have other dimensions without departing from the scope of the present invention, in one embodiment the package has an overall width of about 4.0 cm and an overall length of between about 8.5 cm and about 12.5 cm.

[0030] As illustrated in **FIGS. 7 and 8**, a package of a first embodiment of the present invention is designated in its entirety by the reference numeral **17**. The package **17**, carries a supply **19** of the interlabial pads **1** individually wrapped in their respective sealed hygienic packages **11** readily available for use when needed. The package **17** generally comprises a receptacle **21** (e.g., a pocket) having a mouth or opening **23** (see **FIG. 10** particularly) through which a pad **1** in its sealed package **11** may be withdrawn for use when needed. The receptacle **21** has a reclosable flap **25** for closing the opening **23**. The flap **25** may be closed after a pad **1** is withdrawn to retain the remaining pads in the receptacle **21** until needed.

[0031] The receptacle **21** comprises a bag having front and back walls **27** and **29** joined at the sides **31** and **33** and bottom **35** and free from each other at the top to define the opening **23**. The flap **25** which is integral with the back wall **29** may be folded over the opening **23** so it overlies the front wall **27**. The flap **25** is releasably adhered to the front wall **27** by an adhesive or mechanical closure **37**. The receptacle **21** is formed from an elongate rectangular blank folded along fold **35** to form the front and back walls **27, 29**, respectively. In one embodiment, the blank is a plastic film such as polyethylene film having a thickness of between about 1.25 mil and about 2.0 mils. In alternative embodiments, the blank is a non-woven material or a non-woven and film laminate. The fold **35** constitutes the bottom of the receptacle **21**. The front and back walls **27, 29** are sealed together as by heat seals **31s** and **33s** at both sides, and are free from each other at the top to define the bag opening **23**. The plastic film (e.g., polyethylene) from which the bag is made is generally opaque as by being pigmented (e.g., blue) to conceal the packaged pads in the bag. In one embodiment,

the closure **37** is a spot **45** of pressure-sensitive adhesive such as two-sided tape for releasably adhering the flap **25**. In an alternative embodiment (not shown), the closure **37** includes a stripe of pressure-sensitive adhesive extending from side to side along the receptacle **21**. The packages **11** of pads **1** (e.g., from about three to about six in number) are aligned vertically so they extend from the opening **23** to the bottom **35** of the receptacle **21**. In an alternative embodiment, it is envisioned that the pads **1** may be aligned horizontally from side to side in the receptacle **21**. Although the receptacle **21** may have other dimensions without departing from the scope of the present invention, in one embodiment the receptacle has an overall width measured from side to side of about 10.8 cm and an overall height measured from the opening **23** to the bottom **35** of between about 9.5 cm and about 14.0 cm. Further, the flap **25** of this one embodiment has a width matching the width of the receptacle **21** and a height of about 5.1 cm.

[0032] Thus, the supply **19** of pads **1** is carried in a hygienic condition. Because the receptacle **21** (including the flap **25**) is opaque, the contents are not visible and thus are carried in a discreet manner. A pad **1** is readily available for use in hygienic condition when needed by pulling the flap **35** back (to the open condition illustrated in **FIGS. 9 and 10**) to open the receptacle **21**, withdrawing a sealed package **11**, and tearing it open to access the pad **1** therein. The torn-open package **11** is discarded. The flap **25** may then be re-adhered to the front wall **27** of the receptacle **21** to re-close the bag by means of the closure **37**.

[0033] **FIGS. 11 and 12** illustrate a second embodiment of the package of the present invention, designated by **47** in its entirety. The package **47** of the second embodiment again comprises an opaque plastic receptacle **49** having front and back walls **51, 53**, respectively, joined at the sides **55, 57** by heat-sealed side seams, having a fold **59** for the bottom and an opening **61**. Instead of the flap **25** and closure **37**, the receptacle **49** is provided with conventional press-fit members **63** and **65** (i.e., conventional interlockable plastic channels) extending across the front and back walls **51, 53** adjacent the opening **61**. The receptacle **49** holds a plurality (e.g., three to six) packages **11** of pads **1**. Although in the illustrated embodiment the packages **11** extend vertically from the bottom **59** to adjacent the opening **61** just below the press-fit members **63, 65**, it is also envisioned that the packages may extend horizontally from side to side. The press-fit members **63, 65** are conventionally used on plastic bags and will not be described in further detail. Although the receptacle **49** may have other dimensions without departing from the scope of the present invention, in one embodiment the receptacle has an overall width measured from side to side of about 10.8 cm and an overall height measured from the opening **61** to the bottom **59** of between about 9.5 cm and about 14.0 cm.

[0034] **FIGS. 13 and 14** illustrate a third embodiment of the package of the present invention, designated by **67** in its entirety. For the most part, the package **67** of the third embodiment is the same as the package **47** of the second embodiment except for the use of conventional slide fastener members **69** and **71** (instead of press-fit members **63** and **65**) and a conventional slide fastener **73**. Members **69, 71** and slide fastener **73** are such as conventionally used on plastic bags and will not be described in further detail. Although the receptacle of the package **67** of the third embodiment may

have other dimensions without departing from the scope of the present invention, in one embodiment the receptacle has an overall width measured from side to side of between about 9.5 cm and about 14.0 cm and an overall height measured from the opening to the bottom of about 10.8 cm.

[0035] FIGS. 15-17 illustrate a fourth embodiment of the package of the present invention, designated by 81 in its entirety. The package 81 of the fourth embodiment is in the style of wallet and has two pockets 83 and 85, each having an opening 83m, 85m, facing the other opening. The package 81 may be folded in half with the openings 83m, 85m on the inside. Packages 11 of pads 1 are stocked in the pockets. The package 81 comprises an elongate rectangular outside wall 87 of the opaque plastic film and inside walls 89 and 91 of said film extending across the inside face 93 of the outside wall from one side of the outside wall to the other and inward from the ends of the outside wall. Each inside wall 89, 91 terminates short of the center of the outside wall 87 thereby forming the openings 83m, 85m of a pad-containing pocket.

[0036] In further detail, the receptacle 81 comprises an elongate rectangular blank of the opaque plastic film, portions of which are folded over as indicated at 95, 97 to form the inside walls 89, 91. The folds 95, 97 form the bottoms of the pockets 83, 85. The folded-over end portions forming the inside walls 89, 91 are heat-sealed at both sides as indicated at 99 and 101 to the portion of the blank between folds 95, 97 constituting the outside wall 87. The openings of the pockets 83, 85 lie on opposite sides of a fold line F at the center of the outside wall 87 on which the receptacle is foldable as illustrated in FIG. 17. The receptacle 81 may be held closed by a tab 103 heat-sealed to the outside wall 87 and having a spot (or stripe) 105 of pressure-sensitive adhesive thereon. Or, as shown in FIG. 18, the spot (or stripe) 105 may be applied to one of the inside walls, e.g., inside wall 91 to form a package of a fifth embodiment. Although the pockets 83, 85 of the packages 81 of the fourth and fifth embodiments may have other dimensions without departing from the scope of the present invention, in one embodiment the pockets have overall widths measured from side to side of between about 9.5 cm and about 14.0 cm and overall heights measured from the respective opening to the respective bottom of between about 6.3 cm and about 8.9 cm.

[0037] Although the packages are described above as containing interlabial pads, those skilled in the art will appreciate that the packages may include other feminine care products and associated supplies. For example, the packages may contain a supply of interlabial pads and a

supply of tampons and/or panty liners. Examples of associated supplies which the packages may contain include wipes and/or tissues. Further, it is envisioned that the packages may include more than one size of interlabial pad without departing from the scope of the present invention.

[0038] In view of the above, it will be seen that the several objects of the invention are achieved and other advantageous results attained.

[0039] When introducing elements of the present invention or the preferred embodiment(s) thereof, the articles "a", "an", "the" and "said" are intended to mean that there are one or more of the elements. The terms "comprising", "including" and "having" are intended to be inclusive and mean that there may be additional elements other than the listed elements.

[0040] As various changes could be made in the above constructions without departing from the scope of the invention, it is intended that all matter contained in the above description or shown in the accompanying drawings shall be interpreted as illustrative and not in a limiting sense.

What is claimed is:

1. A package of interlabial pads for carrying a supply of the pads in hygienic condition in such manner as to maintain them in hygienic condition and to be readily available for use in hygienic condition when needed, said package comprising a receptacle, a supply of pads in the receptacle, said receptacle having an opening through which a pad may be withdrawn for use when needed, said receptacle having a reclosable closure for closing the opening, said closure being closed for carrying the pads in hygienic condition and for continued carrying in hygienic condition of the pads remaining in the receptacle after withdrawal of a pad, said receptacle comprising a bag having front and back walls joined at the sides and bottom with said opening at the top, said closure comprising press-fit members extending across the walls adjacent the opening.
2. A package as set forth in claim 1 wherein the bag comprises a blank folded to form said front and back walls, the fold constituting the bottom of the bag and the front and back walls being attached together at the sides thereof.
3. A package as set forth in claim 2 wherein the blank is at least partially opaque to conceal the packaged pads in the bag.
4. A package as set forth in claim 2 wherein the blank comprises a plastic film.
5. A package as set forth in claim 2 wherein the interlabial pads are individually packaged.

* * * * *