A dual-purpose cup that is an ordinary cup that can be rapidly converted into a dysphagia cup. The dual-purpose cup includes a peripheral sidewall open at its upper end and closed at its lower end by a bottom floor. The peripheral sidewall has a perforated line therein proximate to the upper end, wherein the perforated line defines a cutout shape. Removal of the cutout shape along the perforated line converts the dual-purpose cup into a dysphagia cup. The dual-purpose cup can be made of any suitable material, such as a biodegradable material, e.g., paper or cardboard. The dual-purpose cup can be made of any suitable polymer, such as Styrofoam.
DUAL-PURPOSE CUP

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application claims the benefit of priority from U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/634,800, filed Dec. 10, 2004, the entire contents of which is incorporated herein by reference.

STATEMENT REGARDING FEDERALLY SPONSORED RESEARCH OR DEVELOPMENT

Not Applicable.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates to cups. More specifically, the invention relates to dual-purpose cups. Still more specifically, the invention relates to an ordinary cup adapted for rapid conversion to a dysphagia cup.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Some people have difficulty in swallowing. This condition is called dysphagia. A person suffering from dysphagia can alleviate their difficulty in swallowing if they avoid tilting their head rearward while swallowing. Cups have been specially designed to facilitate swallowing without tilting the head back. Such cups often have an unusual appearance that some dysphagia sufferers find embarrassing to use. In addition, those who do not suffer from dysphagia but who need to swallow, for example, tablets with water or milk, are unlikely to use a dysphagia cup. There is a need for a cup that can be used as dysphagia cup and as an ordinary cup.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

This invention is directed to a dual-purpose cup. More specifically, the invention relates to an ordinary cup adapted for rapid conversion to a dysphagia cup. Still more specifically, the invention is a cup made of a material with indentations or perforations in the shape of a cutout. A user, such as a patient, therapist, or caregiver can use the dual-purpose cup as an ordinary cup, but upon removal of the cutout, the dual-purpose cup is converted to a dysphagia cup. The dual-purpose cup of the present invention can be made out of any suitable material, such as paper or Styrofoam, which enables easy removal of the cutout.

In one embodiment, the dual-purpose cup 100 is an ordinary cup that can undergo rapid conversion to a dysphagia cup (represented by alpha-numeric label “100b” in FIG. 4). The dual-purpose cup 100 comprises a peripheral sidewall 200 open at its upper end 220 and closed at its lower end 240 by a bottom floor 260. The peripheral sidewall 200 has a perforated line 120 therein proximate to the upper end 220, wherein the perforated line 120 defines a cutout shape 140 and removal of the cutout shape 140 along line 120 converts the dual-purpose cup 100 (or 100a) into a dysphagia cup 100b. The dual-purpose cup 100 can be made of any suitable material, such as biodegradable paper, e.g., paper or cardboard. The dual-purpose cup 100 can be made of a non-biodegradable material, such as any suitable material such as Styrofoam.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 shows a front view of the first embodiment of a dual-purpose cup in ordinary cup mode, wherein the dual-purpose has a sidewall and a defined cutout shape therein, according to the present invention.

FIG. 2 shows a front view of the second embodiment of a dual-purpose cup according to the present invention.

FIG. 3 shows a perspective view of the dual-purpose cup of FIG. 1, but with the defined cutout shape in the process of being removed to provide a dysphagia cup, according to the present invention.

FIG. 4 shows how the cutout shape can be removed from the dual-purpose cup’s sidewall.

FIG. 5 shows an environmental, perspective view of the dual-purpose cup of FIG. 1, but with the defined cutout shape removed to provide a dysphagia cup, according to the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

This invention is directed to a dual-purpose cup. More specifically, the invention relates to an ordinary cup adapted for rapid conversion to a dysphagia cup. Still more specifically, the invention is a cup made of a material with indentations or perforations in the shape of a cutout. A user, such as a patient, therapist, or caregiver can use the dual-purpose cup as an ordinary cup, but upon removal of the cutout along the perforations, the dual-purpose cup is converted to a dysphagia cup. The dual-purpose cup of the present invention can be made out of any suitable material, such as paper, cardboard or Styrofoam, which enable easy removal of the cutout. A dual-purpose cup made of Styrofoam is eminently disposable. A dual-purpose cup made of paper or cardboard is both biodegradable and disposable.

The dual-purpose cup of the present invention is indicated generally by the numeral 100.

In more detail, the present invention is a dual-purpose cup 100. The dual-purpose cup 100 can be used as an ordinary cup or can be rapidly converted to a dysphagia cup 100b (see FIG. 4). The dual-purpose cup 100 comprises a peripheral sidewall 200 having upper and lower ends 220 and 240, respectively (see FIGS. 1 and 2). The peripheral sidewall 200 is open at its upper end 220 as defined by rim 225, and closed at its lower end 240 by a bottom floor 260 (see, e.g., FIG. 1). The peripheral sidewall 200 includes a perforated line 120 therein proximate to upper end 220, wherein the perforated line 120 defines a cutout shape 140. The cutout shape 140 can be removed along the perforated line 120 (see FIG. 3), which converts the dual-purpose cup 100 into a dysphagia cup 100b (see FIGS. 4 and 5).

It should be understood that the dual-purpose cup 100 is not limited to a particular overall shape. Specifically, the dual-purpose cup 100 can be any shaped cup with a cutout shape 140 forming part of the cup’s sidewall 200, defined by perforation line 120. Thus, the cup 100 can have the overall shape of a conical cylinder, a teacup shape with attached cup handle, or the overall shape of a coffee mug. For example, the cup 100 can be in the shape of a tumbler that is used to drink cold orange juice. Thus, the present
invention is not limited to a particular shaped cup and can have various shaped sidewalls.  

[0016] In more detail, FIG. 1 shows a front view of the first embodiment of the dual-purpose cup 100 according to the present invention. The dual-purpose cup 100 is made out of any suitable material, such as biodegradable paper or cardboard. The dual-purpose cup 100 can be made of any suitable polymer such as Styrofoam. The dual-purpose cup 100 comprises a perforated line 120, which defines a cutout shape 140. Removal of the cutout 140 converts the cup 100 into a dysphagia cup. Prior to removal of the cutout 140, the cup 100 can be used as an ordinary cup, e.g., as an ordinary drinking cup.

[0017] Still referring to FIG. 1, the perforated line 120 can follow any suitable direction providing the cutout 140 is a suitable shape such that when removed from the sidewall 200 (see FIGS. 3 through 5), enables a person with dysphagia to swallow food or medicine such as a prescription tablet, along with a slurf or drink of fluid. The line 120 preferably extends from the rim 225 of the cup 100 to describe a cutout 140 of a generally elliptical or oval shape.  

[0018] FIG. 2 shows a front view of the second embodiment of a dual-purpose cup 100 (actually represented by the alpha-numeral label “100a”) according to the present invention. The cup 100a comprises an image 160 imprinted on the inside of the cup 100a. The image 160 can take any suitable form, such as an image mimicking lips. Such an image is useful as an aid in facilitating the patient in correctly orientating the cup with respect to the patient’s mouth. It should be understood that the image 160 can be displayed or imprinted on any suitable area of the cup 100a and is explicitly not restricted to the location shown in FIG. 2.

[0019] FIG. 3 shows a perspective view of the dual-purpose cup 100, but with the defined cutout shape 140 in the process of being removed by a person’s hand H from sidewall 200 to provide the dysphagia cup 100b, (shown in FIGS. 4 and 5). Obviously, it follows that the shape 140 can be removed in any number of ways using the fingers or thumbs of one or both hands. 

[0020] FIG. 4 shows how the cutout shape can be removed from the dual-purpose cup’s sidewall. For example, a patient or their caregiver can pull or snap out the cutout shape 140 along perforated line 120 to provide the dysphagia cup 100b version of dual-purpose cup 100 (or 100a).  

[0021] As can be seen in FIG. 5, the dual-purpose cup, with the cutout shape 140 removed to provide the dysphagia cup 100b, enables a patient P to swallow water with, for example, a pill containing medication already placed in the patient’s mouth (not shown), without the patient having to substantially tilt his/her head or neck to swallow the medication.  

[0022] It is to be understood that the present invention is not limited to the embodiments described above or as shown in the attached figures, but encompasses any and all embodiments within the spirit of the invention.

I claim:  
1. A dual-purpose cup, said dual-purpose cup is adaptable for use as an ordinary cup or can be rapidly converted to a dysphagia cup, said dual-purpose cup comprising a peripheral sidewall having upper and lower ends, said peripheral sidewall being open at its upper end and closed at its lower end by a bottom floor, said peripheral sidewall having a perforated line therein proximate to said upper end, wherein said perforated line defines a cutout shape and removal of said cutout shape along said perforated line converts said dual-purpose cup into a dysphagia cup.  
2. The dual-purpose cup according to claim 1, wherein said cup is made of a biodegradable material.  
3. The dual-purpose cup according to claim 1, wherein said cup is made of paper.  
4. The dual-purpose cup according to claim 1, wherein said cup is made of cardboard.  
5. The dual-purpose cup according to claim 1, wherein said cup is made of cardboard.  
6. The dual-purpose cup according to claim 1, wherein said cup is made of a polymer.  
7. The dual-purpose cup according to claim 1, further comprising an image imprinted on said sidewall of said dual-purpose cup, whereby said image is useful as an aid in facilitating a patient in correctly orientating said cup with respect to the patient’s mouth.

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