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Panella

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(54) **HYGIENIC DEVICE AND METHOD FOR USE**

(57)

ABSTRACT

(76) Inventor: **Michael Joseph Panella**, Alexandria, NJ (US)

Correspondence Address:
HOFFMANN & BARON, LLP
6900 JERICHO TURNPIKE
SYOSSET, NY 11791 (US)

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The present invention is an apparatus and method for using a hygienic device to form a barrier between an object to be grasped and a user's palm and fingers to prevent the transfer of unwanted bacteria and germs. The device is a covering for the palm and fingers of the user's hand which creates a barrier between the object being grasped and the user's palm and fingers to prevent the transfer of germs thereto. The device is envisioned to have a pocket or other means to facilitate positioning of the hygienic device on the user's hand. The method for using the hygienic device further includes providing a dispenser for holding multiple hygienic devices, a single device can be removed from the holder which is then placed upon the user's hand and is then used. After the hygienic device is used it can be disposed of as needed by the user.

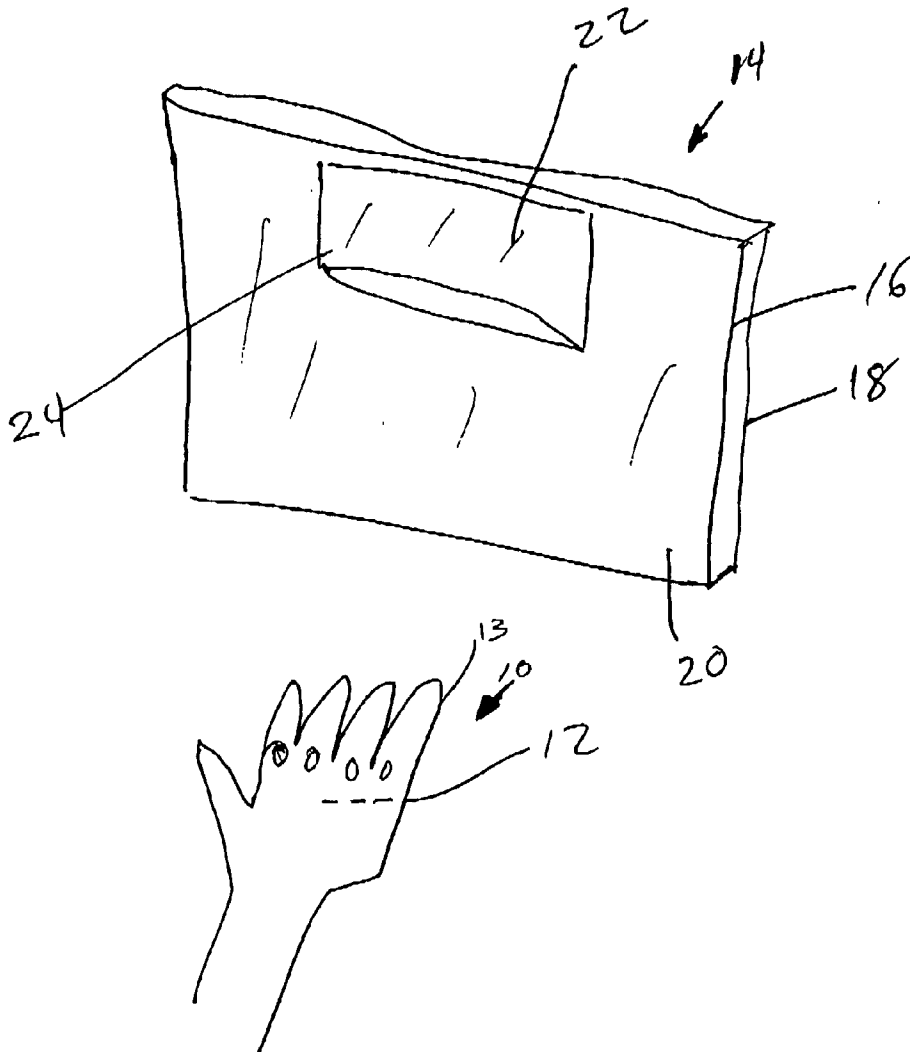


Fig 1.

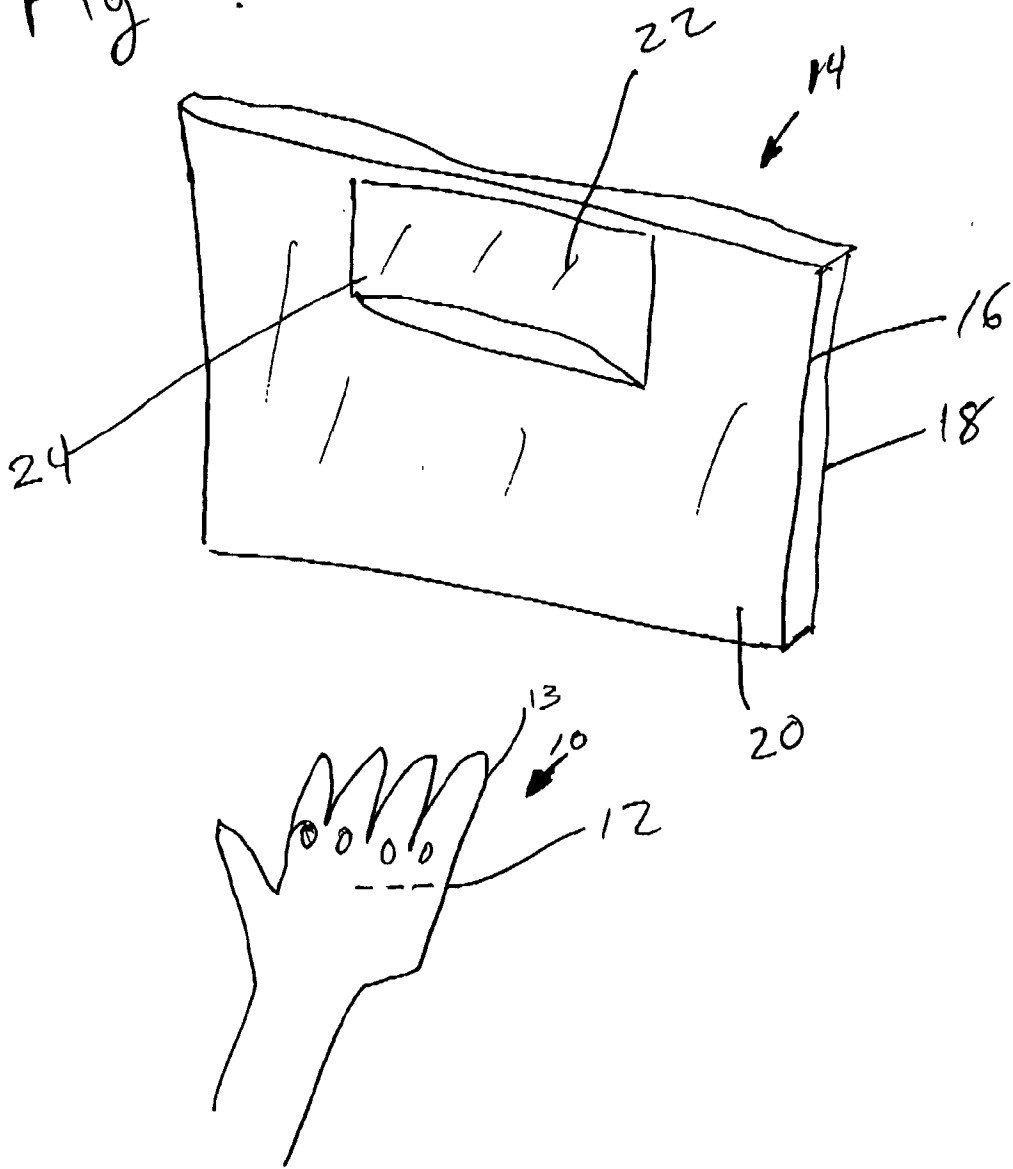


Fig. 2.

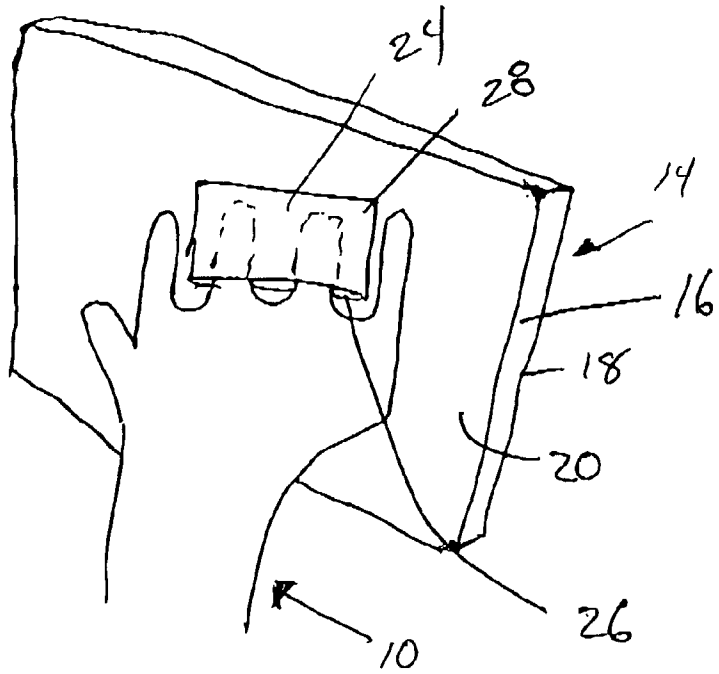
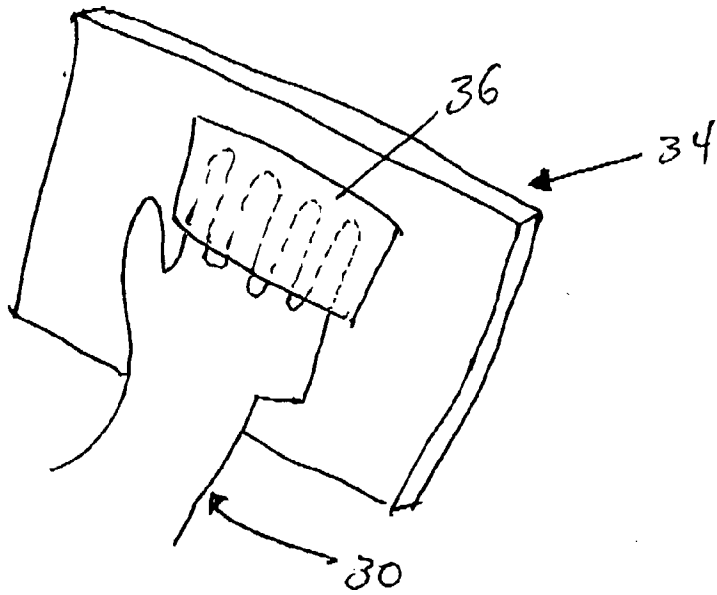
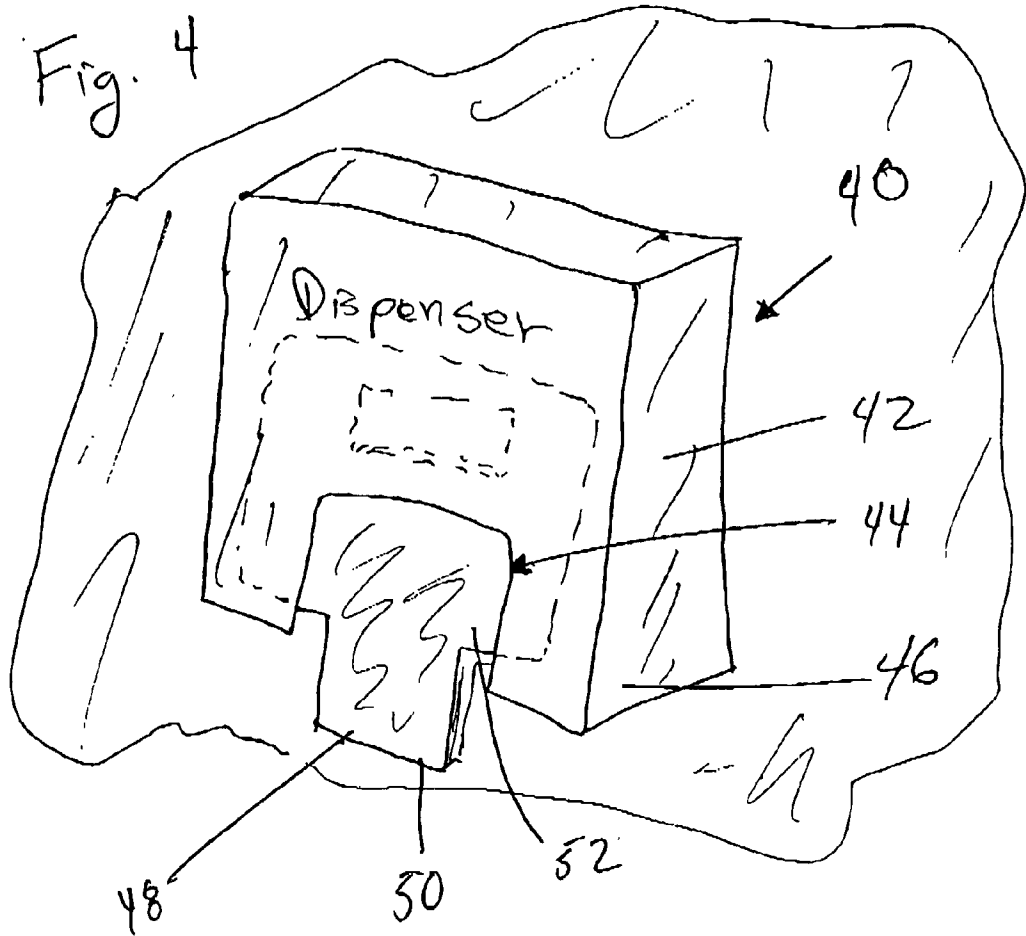


Fig. 3





HYGIENIC DEVICE AND METHOD FOR USE

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The present invention relates generally to a germ or bacteria blocking device which can be easily manufactured and a method for using and disposing of after use, more specifically to a device can be used on the surface of the palm and fingers of a person's hand.

[0002] It is well known that germs and bacteria can be transmitted from one person's hand to an object such as a towel rack, soap dispenser, door latch, faucets, door knob and other fixtures or object and these germs can then be transmitted to a second user's hand when they touch the contaminated object, which was previously touched by an infected hand. Therefore, germs can pass from one person to another through the act of touching a contaminated object, such as a door handle or faucet.

[0003] Typically, objects and fixtures that can be contaminated with germs and bacteria are public restrooms. Although it is common knowledge that hand washing can prevent the transfer of such germs from being transferred to a bathroom fixture, such as a door knob upon leaving a bathroom, it is known that many individuals do not wash their hands and the germs encountered in a bathroom can be transferred from an unwashed hand to a doorknob leading out of the bathroom. Therefore, should a person touch the object after a person has not washed his hands, it is possible that bacteria could be transferred to this second person.

[0004] Since people have become aware of this problem and the possibility of picking up various germs and bacteria from door knobs or other fixtures, it has become a common practice to use either a paper towel or a tissue to grasp the door knob so that a barrier is created between the actual surface of the doorknob and the user's hand. A person may use a paper towel, a handkerchief or any other thin paper or cloth material to create a physical barrier between the surface of the contaminated item and the surface of their hand to prevent the possibility of germs passing to their hand.

[0005] However, the problem with this method is that a paper towel or a tissue may not sufficiently cover the user's hand and a part of the person's hand may contact the contaminated item and allow germs to be passed to the person's hand. In addition, in some restrooms there may be a hot air hand drier and a tissue or paper towel may not be available to use as a germ barrier.

[0006] It would be advantageous to have a hygienic device which would fit over a person's hand and provide a sufficient barrier between the person's palm surface and fingers and the object to be touched. It would also be advantageous to have a dispensing device and a method of using the hygienic device to prevent the transfer of germs from an object to a user's hand.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0007] The present invention contemplates a hygienic device which is used to form a barrier against transfer of germs, bacteria and viruses from an object that needs to be grasped to a user's hand. The current design is an easy-to-use and disposable partial covering for the hand which allows a user to grasp and move various items while still

protecting against possible transfer of germs from contaminated items. In one form, the hygienic device is only a partial covering of the hand, so that it is both easy to put on the user's hand and removed after it is used.

[0008] The present invention envisions having a dispenser which is used to hold several of the hygienic devices so that multiple users can use a new hygienic device when needed. The holder can be positioned in or around areas where items which may be contaminated with bacteria and viruses could be encountered, such as a public restroom, bathroom, laboratory, doctor's office or any other area where the possibility of infection from bacteria, viruses and germs can be transmitted by grasping contaminated objects. The dispenser is preferably positioned next to a place for washing a person's hand on the wall of the exit door or stall, or any other area where it is conveniently seen and can be used. The present invention is a hygienic device having a first sheet, which is sized to cover a palm surface and fingers of a person's hand. The hygienic device can have a means to facilitate grasping the hygienic device and positioning it on the hand to hold it in place over the palm surface and fingers. The hygienic device can have a pocket formed on its palm side so that a person can insert one or more fingers into this pocket to securely hold the hygienic device to their hand. In an alternative embodiment, a mild adhesive (which may contain an antibacterial solution) can be used on the palm side of the hygienic device to temporarily hold the hygienic device to the person's hand while the hygienic device is used so it does not slip.

[0009] A method for using the hygienic device is also envisioned where a person removes a device from a holder and places the device on the person's hand. After the device is properly positioned, the user would then grasp an object which could be contaminated, such as a doorknob, faucet, toilet seat or other fixture. After the hygienic device is used, the user then removes the device from the user's hand and the device is thrown out.

[0010] As a result of the present invention, a cheap and effective barrier is provided for a user so that objects can be grasped in the user's hand and reduce the possibility of transferring any bacteria or viruses thereto.

[0011] It is an advantage of the present invention to provide a hygienic device which is easily positioned on the hand and easily removed after it is used, thus providing a quick and efficient barrier between the user's hand and possible contaminated objects or fixtures.

[0012] It is still a further advantage of the present invention to provide a dispenser and a method for using the hygienic device so that it can be located in areas which may contain contaminated objects so that the device can be accessed readily by a user.

[0013] For a better understanding of the present invention, together with other and further advantages, reference is made to the following detailed description, taken in connection with the accompanying drawings, and the scope of the invention will be pointed out in the appended claims.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0014] FIG. 1 is a top perspective view of a hygienic device of the present invention;

[0015] FIG. 2 is a top perspective view of a first embodiment of the hygienic device of the present invention with a hand being positioned;

[0016] FIG. 3 is a top perspective view of an alternative embodiment of the hygienic device of the present invention with a hand being positioned; and

[0017] FIG. 4 is a top perspective view of a dispenser for the hygienic device of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0018] Referring to FIG. 1 a hygienic device 14 of the present invention is shown. The hygienic device 14 has a first sheet 16 which is sized to preferably cover the entire palm surface 12 and fingers of a person's hand 10 including the palm itself and the palm side 12 of a person's fingers. In a preferred embodiment, the first sheet 16 is sized to be larger than the person's hand 10 to allow for excess materials to extend over a person's hand 10. The hygienic device 14 is preferably made of a germ-blocking material which blocks both bacteria and/or virus from passing from an object through to the person's palm surface 12 of the hand. The first sheet 16 has an outside 18 and an oppositely positioned palm side 20. On the palm side 20 there is a grasping means 22 which is used to facilitate the positioning of the hygienic device 14 on the person's hand 10 so that the palm surface 12 and the finger surfaces 13 are completely covered. As shown in FIG. 1 a pocket 24 is formed on the palm side 20 of the first sheet 16 so that a user's fingers can be inserted to hold the hygienic device 14 in a fixed position in relation to the person's hand 10.

[0019] As shown in FIG. 2 the pocket 24 is shown to allow two fingers to be inserted therein, preferably in a palm-down manner, so that the hygienic device 14 can be secured to a person's hand 10. It is envisioned that this pocket 24 is formed by attaching a separate second piece 28 of material to the palm side 20 of the hygienic device 14 and secured to form a pocket 24 with an opening 26 where at least one finger can be inserted.

[0020] In an alternative embodiment, it is envisioned that the pocket 36 is sized to allow for several fingers to be inserted into the pocket 36 so that a better grasping action is allowed to take place while the hygienic device 34 is placed on the person's hand. As shown in FIG. 3 the pocket 36 is sized to allow four fingers to be inserted, preferably in a palm-down manner, into the pocket 36 so that the hygienic device 34 is sufficiently positioned on the user's hand 30. As shown in FIGS. 1 through 3, it is shown how the hygienic device has a first sheet which can have a longitudinal axis which coincides with the longitudinal dimension of a person's hand extending from the wrist to the middle finger tip. The opening of the pocket can also be formed perpendicular to this axis so that when the person's hand lines up with the longitudinal axis of the hygienic device, the person's fingers are inserted into a pocket having an opening transverse the hygienic device's longitudinal axis.

[0021] In an alternative embodiment, a temporary adhesive can be applied to the palm side of the hygienic device to further facilitate the positioning of the hygienic device on a person's palm surface. This temporary adhesive is of a limited nature although it will allow the sheet a tacky feel, and can be used so that the hygienic device does not

inadvertently fall off or be improperly positioned on the person's palm either before, during or after its usage.

[0022] It is envisioned that the hygienic device can be dispensed from a holder so that multiple hygienic devices can be placed in an area such as a bathroom or lab where many different people may need to use the hygienic device. Referring to FIG. 4, a dispenser 40 containing hygienic devices 48 is shown having an outer housing 42 and an opening 44 therein to allow for removal of the hygienic devices 48. It is envisioned that the housing 42 can be made of a hard plastic, metallic material, or cardboard and positioned on a vertical surface such as a wall, or a horizontal surface such as a table, so it can be easily accessed by a user. The hygienic devices 48 can be placed within the dispenser 40 and stacked upon one another so that when one hygienic device 48 is removed, a second hygienic device 48 underneath is available so as to be removed by the user when needed. It is envisioned that the dispenser 40 has an interior compartment 46 and an access opening 44 to this compartment so that the hygienic devices 48 can be removed when needed. Also, a means to facilitate grasping each individual hygienic device to remove it from the holder can also be provided.

[0023] As shown in FIG. 4, the hygienic device 48 is provided with an extended tab 50 attached to and projecting from the first sheet 52 of a hygienic device 48 to facilitate grasping of one device 48 from the dispenser 40. It is envisioned that this tab 50 can be an extension or a part of the hygienic device 48 and can be integrally made with the hygienic device 48 to decrease costs of manufacture.

[0024] The use of the hygienic device will now be explained in conjunction with the dispenser. The hygienic device is first placed within the holder or dispenser. In a preferred embodiment, several hygienic devices are stacked within the holder so that several different people can use the devices if needed. The dispenser is then positioned on a horizontal or vertical surface within easy reach and viewing area of a potential person to use the device. It is envisioned that the dispenser is positioned in an area such as a public restroom, a laboratory, a hospital, a physician's office or dentist's office so that a user can easily grasp one of the hygienic devices when needed so as not to contact any contaminated items or fixtures which may be associated with any of these areas. It is preferable that the dispenser be positioned next to a towel dispenser or hand-drying device so that after a person's hands properly are cleaned, the person can then take one of the hygienic devices to prevent any further bacteria or viruses from contacting the person's hand upon touching any other objects in the room or upon leaving the room.

[0025] After the dispenser of the hygienic device containing the hygienic devices is properly positioned, a person can remove one of the hygienic devices from the holder and then place the hygienic device on the person's hand. As stated earlier, it is envisioned that a tab or extension can be used, or any other facilitating means, to help the user remove only one hygienic device from the holder at a time. The hygienic device is then placed on the user's hand and substantially covers the palm surface and fingers of the person's hand. After the hygienic device is properly positioned, the user can now grasp an object that may be contaminated by germs since the object is now separated from the user's palm and fingers by the hygienic device.

[0026] The objects which may be grasped by the user are such items such as doorknobs, faucets, toilet handles, toilet seats, soap dispensers and towel racks. All these items may be encountered in any of the areas previously mentioned such as restrooms, laboratories, hospitals and doctor's offices. These items may contain bacteria or germs and thus could be transferred to a user's hand if a hygienic device is not used. The hygienic device of the present invention creates a barrier between the contaminated item and the user's hand so that germs and bacteria cannot be transferred to the user.

[0027] After the person has finished using the hygienic device, the person can easily use the tab or grasp the hygienic device from the palm-side surface with the person's other hand and then dispose of the hygienic device in an appropriate manner.

[0028] The advantage of using the hygienic device is that since it is a simple device, it can be provided in the dispenser as previously mentioned in a variety of environments. The hygienic device is preferably made so that it is disposable so as not to be inadvertently used a second time to possibly transfer germs on the outer surface of the hygienic device to another person or object.

[0029] A further advantage of the present invention is that the hygienic device does not fully cover the outer surface of the user's hand and is easily positioned on the user's palm and fingers and does not require extensive time or effort to be properly used.

[0030] Therefore, while there have been described as what are presently believed to be preferred embodiments of the present invention, those skilled in the art will realize that other and further changes and modifications can be made thereto without departing from the scope of the invention, and it is intended to claim all such changes and modifications that fall within the scope of the invention.

What is claimed is:

1. A method of providing a disposable hand-held hygienic device comprising:

- providing a hygienic device;
- providing a holder for said hygienic device, said holder containing a plurality of hygienic devices;
- positioning said holder on a vertical or horizontal surface so that said hygienic devices can be accessed;
- removing one of said hygienic devices from said holder;
- placing said hygienic device on a hand of a user;
- grasping an object that may contain germs with said hand having said hygienic device to prevent germs from passing through to said hand;
- removing said hygienic device from said hand; and
- disposing of said hygienic device.

2. A method according to claim 1, further including providing said hygienic device with a pocket to insert said user's hand.

3. A method according to claim 2, further including adjusting the position of said hygienic device on said hand to fully cover a palm and finger surface of said hand.

4. A method according to claim 3, further including grasping an object with said hygienic device wherein said hygienic device is positioned between said object and said palm and finger surface of said hand to prevent direct contact of said object with said palm surface.

5. A method of hygienically protecting a user in a facility containing germs, comprising the steps of:

- providing a hygienic device;
- providing a holder for said hygienic device, said holder containing a plurality of hygienic devices;
- positioning said holder within said facility adjacent to a fixture that may contain germs;
- removing one of said hygienic devices from said holder;
- holding said hygienic device on a hand of said user;
- grasping said fixture with said hygienic device disposed between said hand and said fixture;
- displacing said hygienic device from said hand; and
- disposing of said hygienic device.

6. A method according to claim 5, wherein said step of holding said hygienic device on said hand comprises placing said device on one or more fingers of said user.

7. A method according to claim 5, wherein said step of holding said hygienic device on said hand comprises removably adhesively securing said device to said hand.

8. A method according to claim 5, wherein said step of holding said hygienic device on said hand comprises holding an extending tab of said device between the fingers of said user.

9. A method according to claim 5, wherein said step of holding said device on said hand comprises positioning said device on said hand to cover a palm surface of said hand.

10. A method according to claim 5, wherein said holder is positioned in a facility containing germs selected from the group consisting of rest rooms, laboratories, hospitals, physicians' offices and dentists' offices.

11. A method according to claim 5, wherein said hygienic device is used to grasp a fixture that may contain germs selected from the group consisting of doorknobs, faucets, toilet handles, toilet seats, soap dispensers and towel racks.

12. A dispenser unit for hygienic devices comprising:

- a holder;
- a plurality of hygienic devices supported by said holder, each device including at least one substantially flat sheet of material; and

means to facilitate grasping of an individual hygienic device to remove said device from said holder.

13. A unit according to claim 12, wherein said holder includes a box having an interior compartment and an access opening to said compartment, said devices being arranged within said compartment.

14. A unit according to claim 13, wherein said means to facilitate grasping includes a pocket formed on said sheet, said pocket being sized and configured to receive only one or more fingers of a user.

15. A unit according to claim 14, wherein said pocket is defined by a second sheet attached to said one sheet, said pocket having a finger opening oriented relative to said holder to permit finger insertion.

16. A unit according to claim 13, wherein said means to facilitate grasping includes a tab attached to and projecting from said one sheet.

17. A unit according to claim 13, wherein said means to facilitate grasping includes an adhesive on said one sheet, said adhesive being removably adherent to a hand of a user and to an object to be grasped thereby.