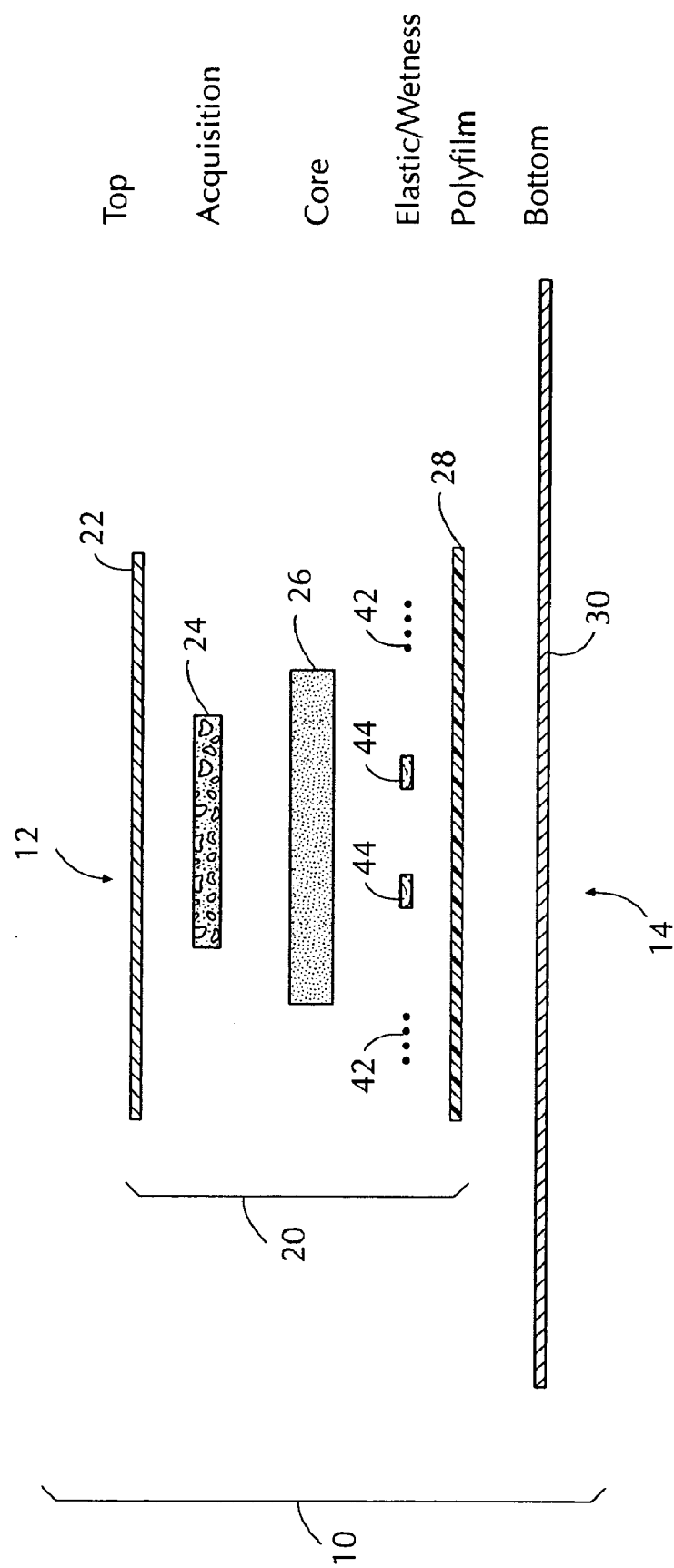


FIG. 1

FIG. 2



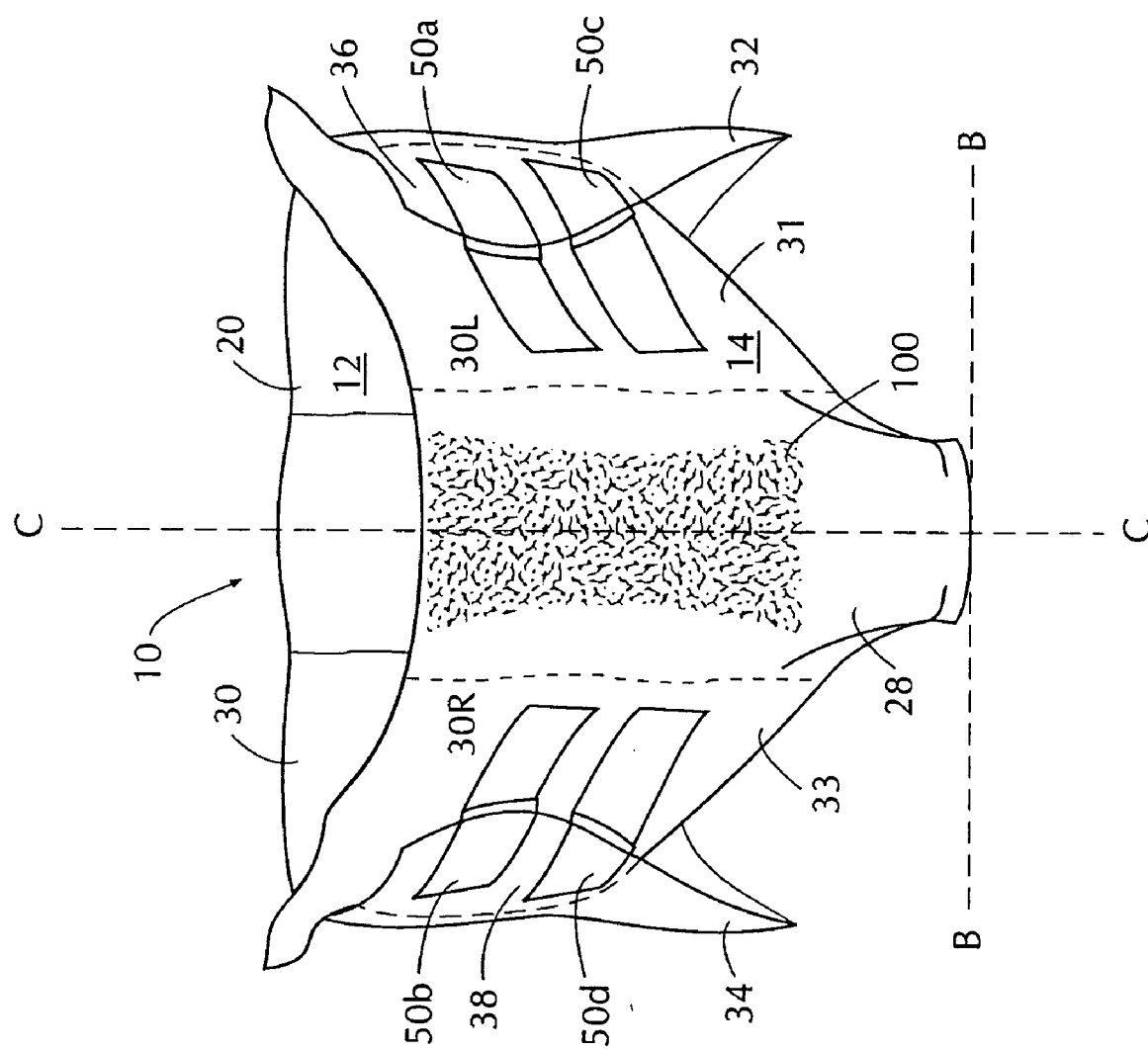
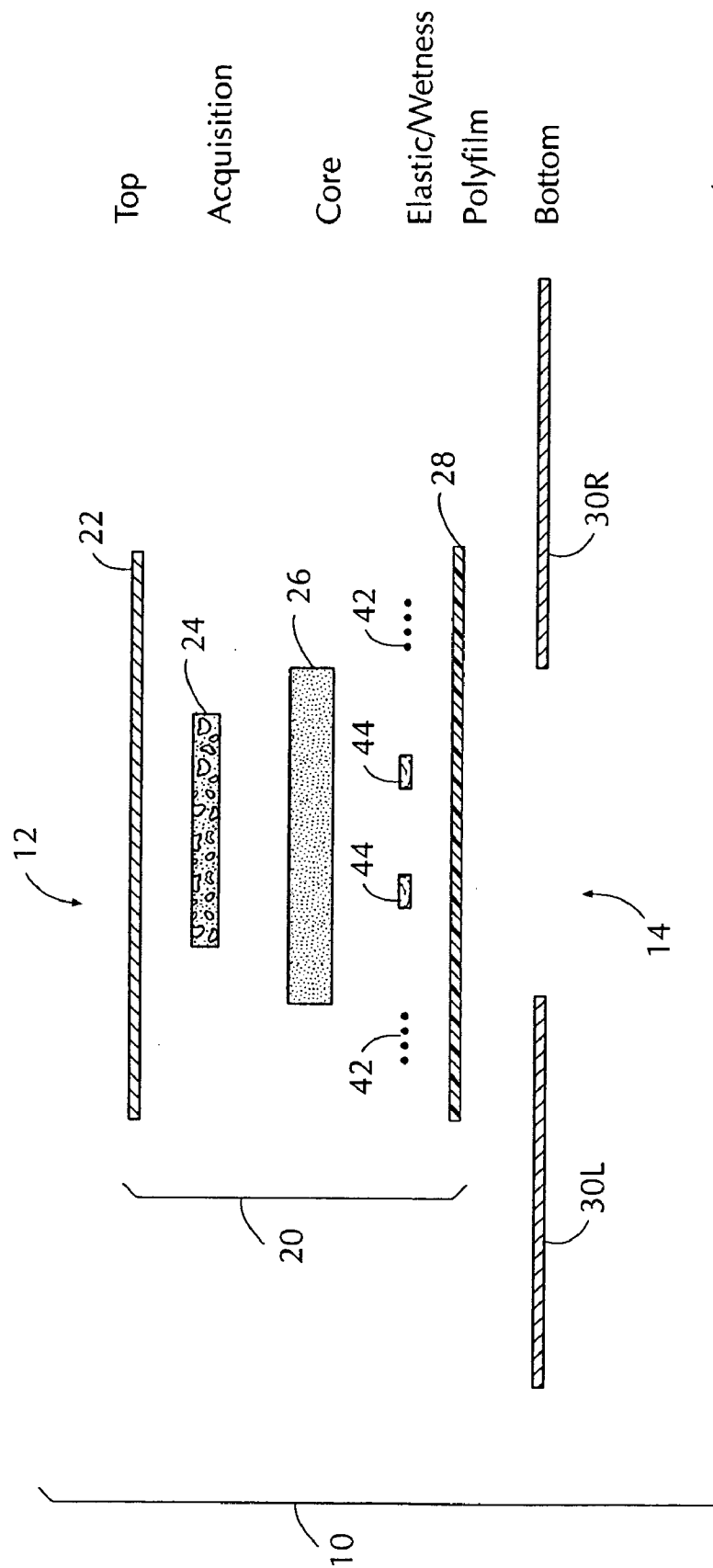


FIG. 3

FIG. 4



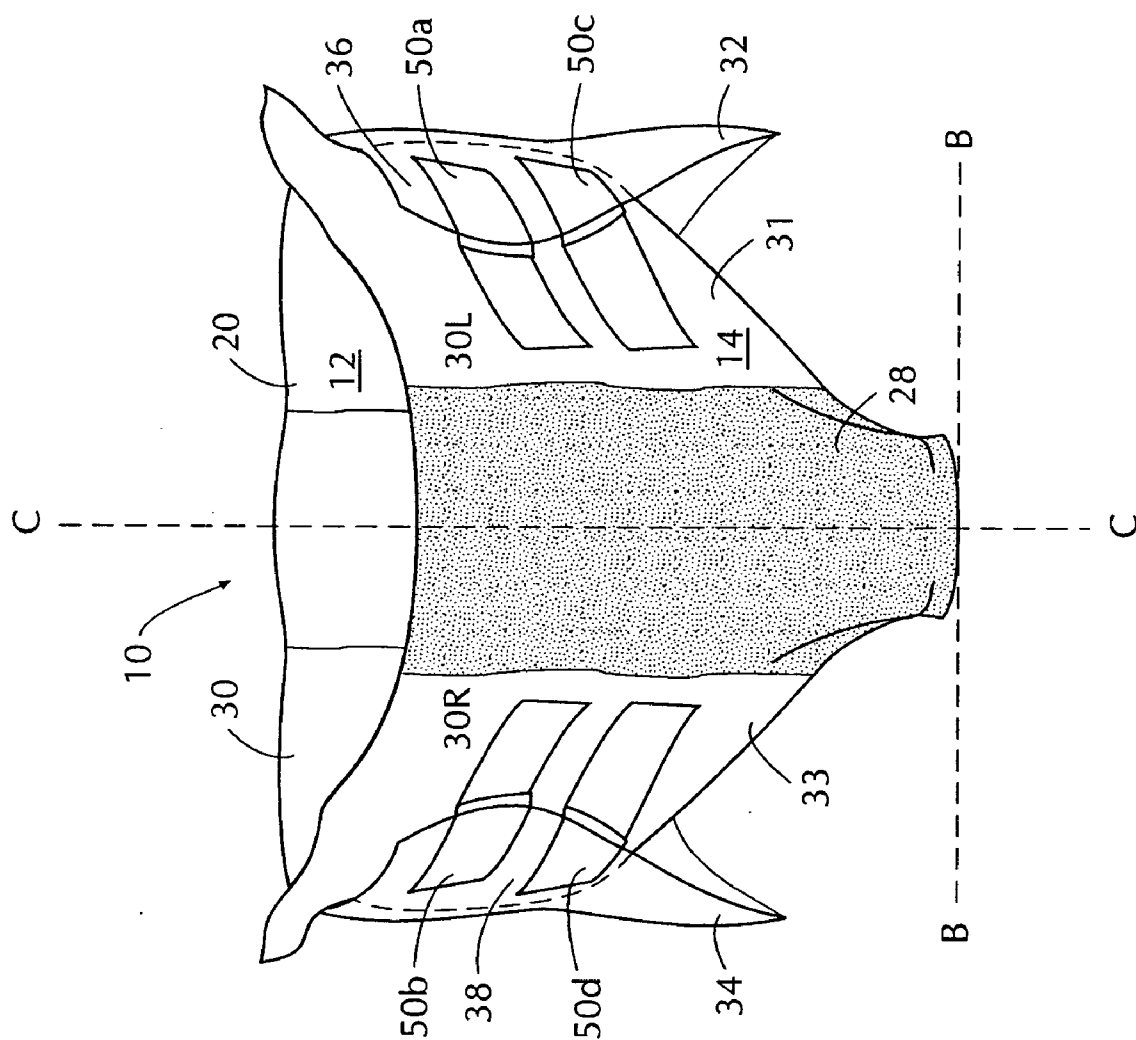


FIG. 5

SKIN FRIENDLY DIAPER

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED PATENT APPLICATION

[0001] This application is a continuation-in-part of U.S. application Ser. No. 10/841,119 (attorney docket no. 34304/144) filed on May 7, 2004, the contents of which are herein incorporated by reference.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0002] The present invention relates generally to disposable absorbent garments such as disposable diapers, and more specifically to disposable diapers having stay away zones that have less affinity to engage hook-type fasteners.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0003] Infants and other incontinent individuals wear disposable absorbent articles such as diapers to absorb and contain body exudates discharged from the body, particularly urine. Absorbent articles function to contain the discharged materials in isolation from the body of the wearer on one side, and from the wearers garments and/or bedding on the other. Absorbent articles are well known in the art and are typically constructed from a combination of liquid and vapor pervious and impervious materials which respectively allow the passage of liquid into the diaper and prevent its exit therefrom.

[0004] It is known to fasten a diaper about the body of a user using a variety of fasteners having a fastening material such as adhesive or a two part hook-and-loop type (i.e. Velcro). These fasteners are typically located at a front or rear portion of the diaper, such as a flap or wing, and are oriented to engage a "landing zone" on an opposing portion of the diaper. For an adhesive fastener, a release strip may be used as a landing zone; a Velcro fastener requires a special looped landing zone.

[0005] U.S. Published patent application No. US 2003/0004490 A1, issued to Larsson et al. discloses an absorbent article such as a diaper having a landing zone arranged on the front or rear portion of the product and at least one hook-bearing tab arranged on the front or rear portion of the product and at least one hook-bearing tab for detachable interaction with the landing zone. The landing zone includes both active areas, to which the tabs can be fastened, and inactive areas which will not adhere to the tabs. Particularly, the landing zone is a continuous support strip with an inactive area connected between two active areas. This enables two landing zones to be formed in one manufacturing step, from a single strip.

[0006] It is also known to make a diaper having Velcro-like hooks as one component of a fastening system and a nonwoven outer surface which serves as the other component. In such a diaper, the hook does not require a special landing zone having special loops. Instead, the entire outer surface of the diaper or brief can function as a landing zone for the hooks. This is known as a "loopless" fastening system, and provides an increased degree of flexibility in the fitting of a diaper to a person. Such a loopless fastener system is described in U.S. patent application Publication No. US 2003/0220626 A1 filed on May 7, 2003 and is hereby incorporated by reference.

[0007] Although such a loopless fastening system is more convenient for the user, there may be a tendency to take advantage of the unlimited landing area provided by loopless fasteners to use diapers that are not properly sized to the wearer. Particularly, diapers that are too large may still be nominally fitted to an individual due to the ability of the loopless fasteners to gather in the slack created by the oversized diaper. This practice is wasteful as larger diapers are likely to be more expensive, and require more material to manufacture.

[0008] U.S. Pat. No. 5,387,208 issued to Ashton et al. on Feb. 7, 1995 discloses an example of a diaper employing a plurality of layers of pervious, absorbent and impervious materials. Particularly, Ashton et al. discloses a pervious body facing top sheet and an impervious garment facing backsheet sandwiching a plurality of layers of variously liquid pervious and absorbent material. The liquid impervious backsheet extends beyond the dimension of the top and intervening layers, thereby providing laterally extending tabs which can be joined about the waist of the wearer to hold the diaper in place during use.

[0009] Although such backsheets do prevent liquid from passing through the diaper, the impervious nature of the backsheet, often a polyethylene film, also prevents the passage of air and water vapor, resulting in a diaper which can feel hot and uncomfortable to wear.

[0010] Backsheets which are pervious to vapor are generally known as breathable backsheets and have been described in the art. In general, these backsheets are intended to allow the passage of vapor through them while retarding the passage of liquid. For example, U.S. Pat. No. 3,156,242 issued to Crowe, Jr. on Nov. 10, 1964 teaches the use of a microporous film as a breathable backsheet. U.S. Pat. No. 3,881,489 issued to Hartwell on May 6, 1975 teaches a breathable backsheet having two layers, the first of which is a thermoplastic film and the second of which is a hydrophobic tissue.

[0011] While perforated backsheets may provide improved breathability over an impervious backsheet, the materials are of limited utility as they may require multiple layers of materials to prevent leakage. Fundamentally, perforation of otherwise impervious films achieves a measure of breathability at the expense of the material's ability to resist the flow of liquid, particularly when a diaper is subjected to the normal forces created by the wearer during use.

[0012] A modified approach is disclosed in U.S. Pat. No. 5,628,737 issued to Dobrin et al. on May 13, 1997, which provides a diaper having an impervious backsheet which extends laterally beyond the dimensions of the absorbent core and top sheet on the diaper wherein only the side panels are provided with perforation, thereby providing an impervious region adjacent to the core and a breathable region which permits some movement of vapor therethrough. This approach creates a zone of liquid impermeability where leaks would otherwise be most likely to occur in the backsheet, and provides a breathable region where leaks are less likely, e.g. where the backsheet comes in direct contact with the skin of the wearer.

[0013] Although the creation of zones of permeability in a diaper resolves some of the problems which are inherent to

the backsheet of the prior art, the perforation of even an isolated region of a plastic film backsheet presents its own shortcomings, particularly due to the inherently impervious character of plastic film. For example, an impervious side panel having relatively large or many perforations may achieve the desired breathability, at the expense of the material strength in the perforated zone. Conversely, side panels having relatively few or small perforations may remain strong, yet provide insufficient breathability to ensure the comfort of the wearer. Basically, the shortcomings of the prior art stem from the attempt to make an impervious material selectively behave like a pervious material. Particularly, when this is attempted on a plastic film, the result cannot be accomplished without undermining the plastic film itself, where increased breathability comes at the expense of the material's desirable properties.

[0014] An additional disadvantage of the disposable diapers of the prior art is that extensive use of impervious material, typically plastic films, is environmentally detrimental as these films are known to be non-biodegradable. The introduction of perforations into otherwise impervious films as suggested in the prior art does not render these substances environmentally friendly. The environmental consequences are above and beyond the other economic disadvantages consequences of present diaper designs, particularly that the use of multiple layers of material and the application of the complex manufacturing techniques necessary in current diaper designs render these approaches more costly than necessary to manufacture and therefore less economical to purchase.

[0015] Finally, the use of a plastic film as a backsheet precludes the use of a loopless fastener system because a plastic film does not allow any use of the backsheet as a landing zone for a loopless fastener.

[0016] Another approach to creating a disposable absorbent article having breathable side panels is found in the Prevail® version of protective underwear manufactured by First Quality Products, Inc. of McElhattan, Pennsylvania. The brief comprises a nonwoven pervious backsheet having an absorbent assembly attached thereto. The product crotch areas are provided with elastic bands sandwiched between the backsheet and an additional layer of nonwoven material. Thus, the side panels are generally pervious, although breathability is impeded by the multiple laminated nonwoven layers, and the adhesive that laminates them. This construction is similar to the Per-Fit® version of diaper, also manufactured by First Quality Products, Inc. which provides increased breathability in side panels comprising two laminated layers of nonwoven material, and is subject to the same drawbacks.

[0017] Therefore a need exists for an absorbent article such as a diaper having a fastening system which prevents improper sizing of oversized diapers.

[0018] A further need exists for an absorbent article such as a diaper having an absorbent core capable of absorbing and retaining fluids, while maximizing the breathability of the article.

[0019] A still further need exists for an absorbent article that minimizes the use of fluid impervious and/or non-biodegradable substances.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0020] It is therefore a feature of various embodiments of the invention to address the aforementioned needs by providing a disposable absorbent article, such as a diaper, having a liquid and/or vapor pervious backsheet formed of a single ply of material which extends laterally from a narrow fluid containment assembly having a liquid impervious backing film. The lateral extensions of the backsheet form a plurality of wings by which the absorbent article is secured about the body of a wearer, typically an infant.

[0021] In accordance with an embodiment of the invention, the diaper is provided with loopless fasteners on one portion thereof, and a nonwoven backsheet which functions as a landing zone for the loopless fasteners. Thus, the diaper according to this embodiment of the invention has only hook fasteners without the conventional loop fasteners in any form or shape (e.g., conventional loops in patch form attached to the diaper front waist). A portion of the backsheet is provided with an area to which the loopless fasteners cannot attach. By controlling the size and location of this "stay-away-zone" improper sizing of diapers can be prevented.

[0022] In accordance with another embodiment of the invention, the containment assembly may be comprised of a liquid and vapor pervious topsheet and a liquid and vapor impervious backing film sandwiching an absorbent core to absorb and contain body exudates. The pervious topsheet and impervious backing film have approximately the same dimensions, and are sufficiently sized to completely contain the absorbent core. The dimensions of the containment assembly, particularly those of the impervious backing film and the topsheet, are laterally narrower than the widest dimension of the backsheet to which the containment assembly is attached.

[0023] In accordance with still another embodiment of the present invention, the backing film may be formed of multiple layers of material, or may be perforated such as to remain fluid impervious but to become vapor pervious.

[0024] In accordance with another embodiment of the present invention, the backsheet may contain one or more apertures where it is adjacent to the backing film, exposing a portion of the backing film therethrough. Alternately, the backsheet can be separated into two portions, the containment assembly attached between them, exposing the backing film, so that a slot is formed in the backsheet that extends longitudinally across the diaper. Thus less material can be used in the manufacture of the backsheet. Moreover, because the impervious material from which the backing film is made is inherently resistant to attachment by a loopless fastener, the exposed portion functions as a stay-away zone. The size and placement of the apertures allows the exposed backing film to function as a stay away zone. The apertures may have any suitable shape, form and size. For example, the apertures may be rectangular, square, circular, or elliptical and the size of the apertures may be, for example, 2-8 inches long and 4-20 inches wide, and preferably 4×12 inches and 4×14 inches for a large diaper and an extra large diaper, respectively.

[0025] Other features and advantages of the present invention will become readily apparent from the following detailed description, the accompanying drawings and the appended claims.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0026] **FIG. 1** is a perspective view of an embodiment of the absorbent article of the invention.

[0027] **FIG. 2** is a lateral cross-sectional schematic of the absorbent article of **FIG. 1**.

[0028] **FIG. 3** is a perspective view of the absorbent article of the invention assembled for use.

[0029] **FIG. 4** is a lateral cross-sectional schematic of an alternate embodiment of the absorbent article of **FIG. 1**, incorporating an integral stay-away-zone.

[0030] **FIG. 5** is a perspective view of the absorbent article of the embodiment of **FIG. 4**.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0031] As used herein, the term “absorbent article” refers to devices which absorb and contain body exudates, and more specifically, refers to devices which are placed against or in proximity to the body of the wearer to absorb and contain the various exudates discharged by the body. The term “disposable” is used herein to describe absorbent articles which are not intended to be laundered or otherwise restored or reused as an absorbent article, but instead are intended to be discarded after a single use and, preferably, to be recycled, composted or otherwise disposed of in an environmentally compatible manner. A “unitary” absorbent article refers to absorbent articles, such as diapers, which are formed of separate parts united together to form a coordinated entity so that they do not have multiple parts or require assembly prior to use such as a separate holder and liner.

[0032] A preferred embodiment of an absorbent article of the present invention is the unitary disposable diaper **10**, shown in **FIG. 1**. As used herein, the term “diaper” refers to an absorbent article generally worn by infants and incontinent persons that is worn about the lower torso of the wearer. It should be understood, however that the present invention is also applicable to other absorbent articles such as incontinent briefs, incontinent undergarments, training pants, diaper holders, and panty liners and other feminine hygiene products. In particular, training pants have side panels which are pre-attached whereas ordinary diapers have wings which are fastened together to secure the diaper.

[0033] **FIG. 1** is a plan view of the diaper **10** of the present invention, with elastic induced contraction pulled out, with a portion of the structure cut away to reveal the inner construction of diaper **10**, and with body-facing side **12** facing upwardly. Diaper **10** has a longitudinal axis defined by longitudinal centerline C, the term “longitudinal”, as used herein, referring to a line, axis or direction in the plane of diaper **10** that is generally aligned with, or parallel to, longitudinal centerline C and defines the length of diaper **10**. Transverse axis B extends through diaper **10**, intersecting longitudinal centerline C at a right angle in the plane of diaper **10**. Transverse axis B defines the transverse orientation relative to diaper **10** and divides diaper **10** into front and rear sections FS and RS respectively. As used herein, the term “transverse” refers to a line, axis or direction that is generally perpendicular to the longitudinal direction and defines the width of diaper **10**.

[0034] The perimeter of Diaper **10** is defined by backsheet **30**. The diaper **10** can be divided into three regions: a containment assembly **20** which extends symmetrically along longitudinal centerline C, and two longitudinally disposed portions **30L** and **30R** which extend variably in the transverse direction along their length and which define the left and right sides of the diaper respectively. In its preferred embodiment, backsheet **30** of diaper **10** has an “hourglass” configuration wherein portions **30L** and **30R** narrow to form a crotch region at transverse axis B between front and rear sections FS and RS.

[0035] Referring to **FIGS. 1 and 2**, the structure of diaper **10** is illustrated from body-facing surface **12** toward garment or outer surface **14**. Containment assembly **20** preferably comprises a topsheet **22**, an acquisition layer **24**, an absorbent core **26** and a backing film **28**. In a preferred embodiment, crotch elastic bands **42** and/or wetness indicators **44** may be added to one of the components of containment assembly **20**. Containment assembly **20** is mounted upon backsheet **30** to form diaper **10**.

[0036] Topsheet **22** may be made of any suitable relatively liquid-pervious material currently known in the art or later discovered that permits passage of a liquid therethrough. Examples of suitable top sheet materials include nonwoven, spun-bonded or carded webs of polypropylene, polyethylene, nylon, polyester and blends of these materials perforated, apertured or reticulated films, and the like. Nonwoven materials are exemplary because such materials readily allow the passage of liquids to the underlying acquisition layer **24**, and therethrough to absorbent core **26**. The top sheet is preferably formed of a single ply of nonwoven material that may be made of thermally bonded, spunbonded fibers, spunbond-meltblown-spunbond or fibers that have been hydroentangled, having a basis weight of 10-30 grams per square meter and having appropriate strength and softness for use as a topsheet in an application which will be in contact with human skin. Topsheet **22** may be treated with surfactant, rendering it hydrophilic to facilitate the passage of moisture through topsheet **22** and into the interior of containment assembly **20**. The present invention is not intended to be limited to any particular material for top sheet **24** and other top sheet materials will be readily apparent to those skilled in the art.

[0037] Acquisition layer **24** may be a single layer or multiple layers made of synthetic or natural material, or a combination of both, or a single multilayer apertured film. Acquisition layer **24** serves to quickly collect and distribute discharged body fluid to absorbent core **26**. Because such fluid is typically discharged in gushes, the area of absorbent core **26** proximate to the point of fluid discharge may be overwhelmed by its rate, resulting in a leak. Therefore, the acquisition layer **24** facilitates transport of the fluid from the point of discharge across its surface area to contact other parts of absorbent core **26** from which it can be more readily absorbed. The use of an acquisition layer is well known in the art. Accordingly, acquisition layer **24** of diaper **10** of the present invention may have any well known or as yet undiscovered composition. Alternatively, absorbent core **26** may have the construction disclosed in U.S. Pat. Nos. 6,068,620 or 6,646,180 to Chmielewski, both of which are hereby incorporated by reference.

[0038] Absorbent core **26** may be any absorbent material which is generally compressible, conformable to the shape

of the wearer's body and will not impede normal movement by the wearer, and capable of absorbing and retaining liquids such as urine and certain other body exudates. The absorbent core **26** may be manufactured in a wide variety of sizes and shapes, (e.g., rectangular, hourglass, "T"-shaped, asymmetric, etc.) and from a wide variety of liquid-absorbent materials commonly used in disposable diapers and other absorbent articles such as wood pulp fluff. Examples of other suitable absorbent materials include creped cellulose wadding; meltblown polymers; chemically stiffened, modified or cross-linked cellulosic fibers; tissue including tissue wraps and tissue laminates; absorbent foams; absorbent sponges; superabsorbent polymers; absorbent gelling materials; or any equivalent material or combinations of materials.

[0039] The configuration and construction of absorbent core **26** may also be varied (e.g., the absorbent core may have varying caliper zones, a hydrophilic gradient, an absorbent gelling material gradient, or lower average density and lower average basis weight acquisition zones; or may comprise one or more layers or structures, i.e., members, including sheets or webs. In addition, each member need not be formed of a single unitary piece of material, but may be formed of a number of smaller strips or components joined together lengthwise or width-wise, as long as they are in fluid communication with one another.) The total absorbent capacity of absorbent core **26** should, however, be compatible with the design loading and the intended use of the diaper **10**. Further, the size and absorbent capacity of the absorbent core **26** may be varied to accommodate wearers ranging from infants through adults.

[0040] Backing film **28** preferably is made from any suitably pliable liquid impervious material known in the art. Typical backing film materials include films of polyethylene, polypropylene, polyester, nylon and polyvinyl chloride and blends of these materials. For example, backing film **28** can be made of a polyethylene film having a thickness in the range of 0.5 to 2.0 mils. Other backing film materials will be readily apparent to those skilled in the art. Backing film **28** preferably has sufficient liquid imperviousness to prevent any leakage of fluids. The required level of liquid imperviousness may vary between different locations on diaper **10**. Accordingly, the backing film **28** may be made vapor pervious or multi layered, having varying degrees of liquid-imperviousness. Backing film **28** may have the same width as topsheet **22**, or may be narrower or wider. Preferably, topsheet **22** and backing film **28** have about the same widths. Backing film **28** may be a composite of a film and another fibrous woven or nonwoven that is, for example, spunbond, melt blown, spunbond-meltblown-spunbond, thermally bonded or chemically bonded. These nonwovens may have very light to moderate bonding. For example, the cross direction tensile strength of each nonwoven may be less than 300 grams/inch.

[0041] As discussed above, topsheet **22**, acquisition layer **24**, absorbent core **26** and backing film **28** form the basic components necessary to the preferred embodiment of containment assembly **20**. Crotch elastic bands **42** may be adhered to the lateral margins of containment assembly **20** to bias containment assembly **20** into a shape which conforms to that of the wearer's body. Furthermore, wetness indicators **44** may be provided in contact with absorbent core **26** to provide a visual indication that diaper **10** has received and is holding liquid.

[0042] Containment assembly **20** may be self contained, for example by adhering the perimeter of topsheet **22** to the perimeter of backing film **28**, such as with ordinary adhesive, or by bonding, with heat or ultrasonically, the components to each other. In such a construction, acquisition layer **24** and absorbent core **26** are contained within a package formed by backing film **28** and topsheet **22**. Containment assembly **20** may then be adhered to backsheet **30**. Alternatively, topsheet **22** may be adhered directly to backsheet **30**, topsheet **22** securing the components of containment assembly **20** between backsheet **30** and topsheet **22**. Although the precise shape of containment assembly **20** may vary, it is preferred that top sheet **22** and backing film **28** have generally the same shape and dimensions. Particularly, however, backing film **28** should be sufficiently large to at least completely cover the outer surface of absorbent core **26** to prevent leakage of fluid from absorbent core **26** to backsheet **30**, but must not significantly exceed the width of topsheet **22**, and should generally be slightly narrower than topsheet **22**.

[0043] Backsheet **30** is made of a liquid and/or vapor-pervious material which may be selected from the same group of materials from which the top sheet was selected and preferably having a weight of between 5-45 grams per square meter. Unlike topsheet **22**, however, the material used for backsheet **30** is preferably rendered hydrophobic by omitting the surfactant discussed above with respect to topsheet **22**. Backsheet **30** may be manufactured by well known methods such as thermal bonding, chemical bonding, spun bonding and hydroentanglement.

[0044] Backsheet **30** preferably has the same or greater longitudinal dimension to that of containment assembly **20**. As discussed below, however, it is critical that backsheet **30** be formed of a single layer of material, and that the lateral dimension of the backsheet exceed, at least in part, the width of containment assembly **20**.

[0045] As shown in FIG. 1, containment assembly **20** is preferably attached to backsheet **30** symmetrically along longitudinal centerline C. As containment assembly **20** is necessarily narrower and preferably shorter than at least some portions of backsheet **30**, portions of backsheet **30** remain unattached from containment assembly **20**. In the preferred embodiment, the hourglass shape of backsheet **30** results in two wings in each of longitudinal portions L and R to which containment assembly **20** is not attached.

[0046] Alternatively, a T-shaped backsheet would result in one such wing in each of L and R respectively. Wings **31** and **33** are on front section FS of diaper **10** and wings **32** and **34** on rear section RS thereof. As each of wings **31-34** are formed of marginal portions of backsheet **30**, they comprise a single layer of liquid and vapor pervious material, rear wings **32** and **34** being provided with fasteners **50a-50d**. The fasteners may be any of adhesive, hook-and-loop, loopless or any other fastener known in the art which is capable of securing itself, preferably removably, to the material of backsheet **30**. Fasteners **50a-50d** may also be double-sided patches attached to backsheet **30** on one side and having a fastening material on the other.

[0047] It is known in the art to provide fasteners which have one end coated with a pressure sensitive adhesive. In a case where fasteners **50a-50d** are formed of such pressure adhesive material, landing zones (not shown) are provided

on the opposite side of the diaper corresponding to the location at which the fasteners are expected to be attached during assembly of the diaper. In this case, the landing zones may be a coated release paper or similarly smooth surface disposed over the nonwoven backsheet **30**. Similarly, a hook-and-loop type arrangement requires fasteners **50a-50d** to have a plurality of either hooks or loops disposed on one side thereof, with a landing zones providing corresponding loops or hooks located respectively in corresponding regions on the opposite side of the diaper. The need for landing zones is a result of the fact that nonwoven material may not form a sufficiently strong bond with adhesive or other conventional fasteners to support the assembled diaper during use.

[0048] The need to provide a landing zone has been eliminated, however, by the introduction of minihook fasteners which are capable of fastening securely to conventional nonwovens without a corresponding landing zone. These loopless fasteners are ideal for providing a degree of flexibility and choice to the user in the positioning of the fasteners on the diaper.

[0049] A problem recognized with the loopless fastener, however, is that the flexibility they provide encourage the use of inappropriately sized diapers, for example a large diaper on a medium sized person, with the fasteners merely being secured to a more remote portion of the nonwoven outer surface of the diaper. This type of misuse is wasteful and could not occur in diapers requiring a landing zone as the landing zones limit the areas on the diaper to which a fastener can be applied.

[0050] To ameliorate this type of misuse, a stay away zone **100** could be provided on a portion of the outer surface of the diaper. The stay away zone could be limited to the most remote areas, thereby permitting a wide range of fastener placement while preventing improper sizing of the diaper.

[0051] Stay away zone **100** can be created by spraying a solution or attaching a film over a portion of nonwoven backsheet **30** to which the fastener could not attach. Alternately, a stay away zone could be defined by selectively modifying areas of nonwoven backsheet **30**, such as by heat or compression, to destroy its ability to adhere to the hooks of a loopless fastener. For example, a patch having dimensions of 7 inches×11 inches and made from stay away zone material may be attached to the outer surface of the front of the diaper to prevent misuse.

[0052] As shown in **FIG. 3**, diaper **10** is shown as assembled. The diaper **10** is folded about lateral axis B as it would be about a wearer, such that body facing side **12** is oriented inward and outer surface **14** is oriented outward. Containment assembly **20** is shown between left and right longitudinal portions L and R which define the breathable portions of diaper **10** respectively. Specifically, on the left, wing **32** is shown folded over wing **31** and fastened thereto by fasteners **50a** and **50c**, creating overlapping region **36**. Similarly, wing **34** is shown folded over wing **33** and fastened thereto by fasteners **50b** and **50d**, creating overlapping region **38**. Thus, at the regions of diaper **10** defined by longitudinal portions L and R, only a single layer of liquid and vapor permeable material contact the skin of the wearer, with the exception of overlapping regions **36** and **38**, which are similarly permeable. Thus, a diaper **10** is provided having breathable sides which increase the comfort of the diaper to the wearer.

[0053] Additionally, due to the reduced size of impervious backing film **28** relative to backsheet **30**, a reduced amount of film material is required in the construction of diaper **10** relative to a diaper having an impervious backsheet. As backing film **28** is typically plastic and therefore non-biodegradable, the present invention provides a diaper with a minimum of such material.

[0054] An alternate embodiment of diaper **10** is shown in **FIG. 4**. The structure of the diaper is essentially the same as that shown in **FIG. 2**, with the exception that in this embodiment, portions of backsheet **30L** and **30R** are divided by an aperture which exposes backing film **28** through the backsheet. Ideally, backing film **28** is inherently resistant to engagement with a loopless fastener. Therefore, as shown in **FIG. 5**, the assembled diaper **10** is illustrated having a region between portions **30R** and **30L** of backsheet **30** in which backing film **28** is exposed. In a diaper **10** wherein fasteners **50** are loopless fasteners, such fasteners would not engage the exposed portions of backing film **28**, where the exposed film comprises a stay-away-zone. The backsheet **30** can be made of any suitable material, such as, for example, spunbond, chemical, thermal bond or hydro entangled (HEF) nonwoven. The aperture dividing the portions of the backsheet **30L** and **30R** may have any suitable shape, form and size. For example, the aperture may be rectangular, square, circular, or elliptical and the size of the aperture may be, for example, 2-8 inches long and 4-20 inches wide, and preferably 4×12 inches and 4×14 inches for a large diaper and an extra large diaper, respectively.

[0055] **FIG. 5** illustrates a preferred embodiment of the stay-away zone wherein the stay-away-zone extends along the entire longitudinal axis of the diaper **10**. In such an embodiment, portions **30L** and **30R** of backsheet **30** do not contact each other on the diaper, and are therefore essentially two separate strips of material defining an aperture between them. In this embodiment, portions **30L** and **30R** may be attached respectively to the lateral margins of backing film **28** such as by an adhesive or heat-bonding.

[0056] The size of the stay-away-zone created by the exposed backing film **28** is limited by the size of the aperture in backsheet **30**, which may not extend outside the perimeter of backing film **28**. As shown in **FIG. 5**, the stay-away zone may extend laterally along the entire diaper **10**, essentially dividing backsheet **30** into two separate portions **30R** and **30L**. Likewise, the location of the stay-away-zone created in this embodiment is inherently limited by the location of backing film **28**. In this regard, **FIG. 5** illustrates a stay away zone centered about longitudinal centerline C.

[0057] Ideally, in cases where the size and location of a stay-away-zone is within the parameters of existing backing film **28**, the embodiment of **FIGS. 4 and 5** is advantageous as less material is needed for backsheet **30**, and no additional material or treatment is necessary to create a stay-away-zone on diaper **10**. These advantages result in a product of lower cost, and greater environmental benefit. Alternatively, however, the shape, location and size of backing film **28** can be modified somewhat, provided that the integrity of containment assembly **20** is not compromised and that backing film **28** does not extend sufficiently into the wings of backsheet **30** to render the sides of diaper **10** liquid and/or vapor impervious.

[0058] While particular embodiments of the present invention have been illustrated and described, it would be

obvious to those skilled in the art that various other changes and modifications can be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention. It is therefore intended to cover in the appended claims all such changes and modifications that are within the scope of this invention.

What is claimed is:

1. An absorbent article comprising:

a backsheet having a shape defining a longitudinal axis, a minimum lateral dimension, a maximum lateral dimension and at least one aperture therein;

one or more hook fasteners, each of said hook fasteners permanently attached at one end to a first part of said backsheet and having a hook fastening material at a second end thereof, said hook fastening material adapted to removably engage a second part of said backsheet; and

a containment assembly having a shape defining a maximum lateral dimension which is less than the maximum lateral dimension of said backsheet, said containment assembly comprising;

a topsheet;

a fluid impermeable backing disposed beneath said topsheet, said fluid impermeable backing formed of a material adapted to resist engagement by said fastening material; and

an absorbent core sandwiched between said topsheet and said fluid impermeable backing; wherein

said containment assembly is attached to said backsheet along said longitudinal axis, said fluid impermeable backing completely covers said aperture and exposed therethrough to define a stay-away-zone, and said backsheet forms a plurality of single-layer breathable regions laterally disposed beyond said containment assembly.

2. The absorbent article of claim 1, wherein said shape of said containment assembly is generally symmetrical about a longitudinal axis.

3. The absorbent article of claim 2, wherein said topsheet of said containment assembly is attached to said fluid impermeable backsheet, and said absorbent core and said fluid impermeable backing are positioned between said topsheet and said backsheet.

4. The absorbent article of claim 2, wherein said topsheet of said containment assembly is attached to at least a portion of said fluid impermeable backing.

5. The absorbent article of claim 2, wherein said containment assembly incorporates absorbent members to assist in the placement of said absorbent article against the body of a wearer.

6. The absorbent article of claim 2, wherein an acquisition layer is positioned between said topsheet and said fluid impermeable backing to facilitate distribution of moisture across said absorbent core.

7. The absorbent article of claim 1, wherein said backsheet is formed of a spunbond nonwoven and said hook fasteners are removably attachable thereto without adhesive.

8. The absorbent article of claim 7, wherein said backsheet defines a front region at one end of said longitudinal axis and a rear region at the other end of said longitudinal axis, and a crotch region joining said front and rear regions,

wherein said front and rear regions have a lateral dimension of approximately said maximum lateral dimension, and said crotch region has a lateral dimension of approximately said minimum lateral dimension.

9. The absorbent article of claim 8, wherein said maximum lateral dimension of said containment assembly does not exceed the minimum lateral dimension of said backsheet.

10. The absorbent article of claim 9, wherein said backsheet is formed of nonwoven material and said hook fastening material is adapted to directly engage nonwoven material.

11. The absorbent article of claim 10, wherein said backsheet is formed of a hydroentangled, spunbond nonwoven.

12. The absorbent article of claim 10, wherein said backsheet is a spunbond nonwoven.

13. The absorbent article of claim 1, wherein said aperture extends along the longitudinal axis of said article, said backsheet being separated into two unconnected portions.

14. The absorbent article of claim 14, wherein said unconnected portions of said backsheet are attached to said fluid impermeable backing by adhesive.

15. The absorbent article of claim 1, wherein the fluid impermeable backing is a film.

16. The absorbent article of claim 1, wherein said backsheet is one from a group consisting of thermally bonded, chemically bonded, spunbond and hydroentangled nonwoven.

17. An absorbent article comprising:

a containment assembly having a shape defining maximum lateral dimension and having a first and a second lateral margin, said containment assembly comprising;

a topsheet;

a fluid impermeable backing disposed beneath said topsheet, said fluid impermeable backing formed of a material adapted to resist engagement by a hook fastening material; and

an absorbent core sandwiched between said topsheet and said fluid impermeable backing;

a first vapor permeable backsheet portion having a shape defining a longitudinal axis and a maximum lateral dimension attached to said containment assembly at said first lateral margin;

a second vapor permeable backsheet portion having a shape defining a longitudinal axis and a maximum lateral dimension attached to said containment assembly at said second lateral margin; and

one or more hook fasteners, each of said hook fasteners permanently attached at one end to one of said first and second backsheet portions and having said hook fastening material adapted to removably engage another of said first and second backsheet portions; wherein

said containment assembly is attached between said first and second backsheet portions and said topsheet, said fluid impermeable backing film is exposed between said first and second backsheet portions to define a stay-away-zone, and said first and second backsheet

portions form a plurality of single-layer breathable regions laterally disposed beyond said containment assembly.

18. The absorbent article of claim 17, wherein the fluid impermeable backing is a film.

19. The absorbent article of claim 17, wherein said first and second backsheet portions are formed of spunbond nonwoven.

20. The absorbent article of claim 17, wherein said first and second backsheet portions are selected from a group consisting of thermally bonded, chemically bonded, spunbond and hydroentangled nonwoven.

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