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(54) **Container with two opposing lids**

(57) The present invention is directed to a container (2) comprising: a body portion (4) consisting of a side wall (12) and a base wall (10), the container further comprising a first lid (6) and a second lid (8), wherein the first lid (6) and the second lid (8) are both removably attached

to the side wall (12) and wherein the body portion (4) and the first lid (6) form a first compartment (14), wherein the body portion (4) and the second lid (8) form a second compartment (16) and wherein the first compartment (14) and the second compartment (16) are located on opposite sides of the base wall (10).

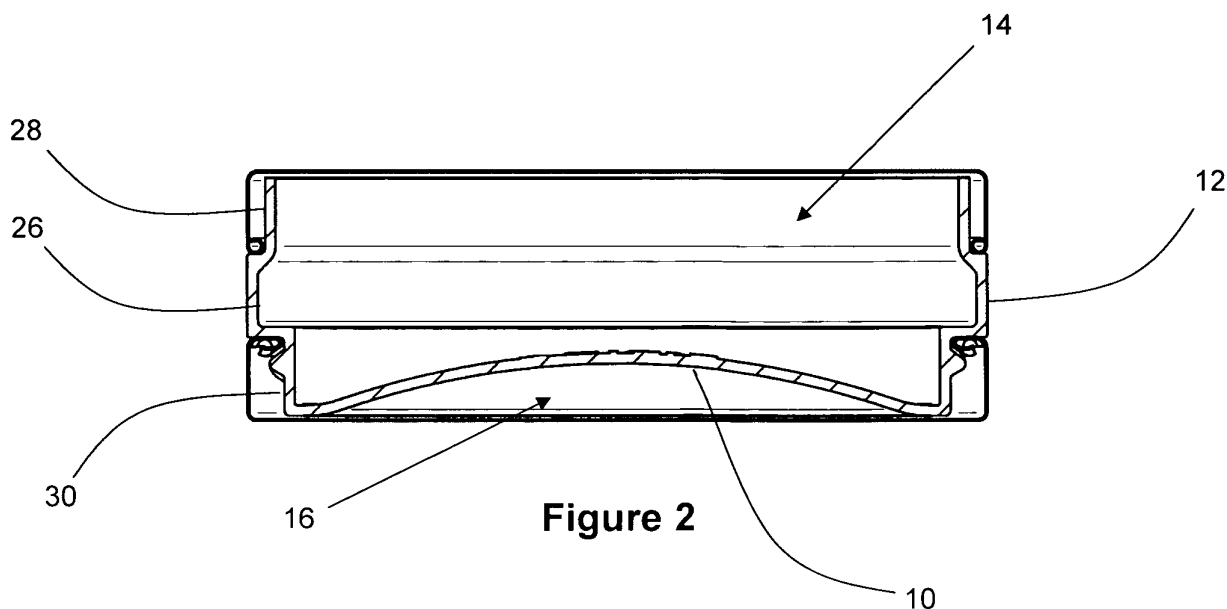


Figure 2

Description

[0001] The present invention relates to a novel container for consumer items. The container is particularly suitable for such items that deliver oral sensations. More particularly, the container is suitable for flavour pouches for oral delivery of one or more selected flavourants including tobacco.

[0002] Consumer items are commonly sold in boxes or tins having a box portion for housing the items, and a removable lid for closing the box portion.

[0003] It has been proposed to provide a container for consumer items having an additional small compartment in the lid portion. For example, WO-A-2005/016036 discloses a box having a lid portion comprising a lower lid, which seals the portion of the box containing snuff, and a cover lid moveably secured to the lower lid by a hinged joint. The lower lid and the cover lid between them define a space, which is intended for the storage of used snuff. The cover lid is held in a closed position by means of a tab, which interacts with a corresponding part on the lower lid.

[0004] It would be desirable to provide a container having two or more separate compartments, each of which may be easily opened and closed. It would also be desirable to provide a container having two or more separate compartments, each of which is accessible independently from the other compartments. It would further be desirable if such a container could be simply manufactured and assembled.

[0005] According to the present invention there is provided a container comprising a body portion, wherein the body portion consists of a side wall and a base wall. The container further comprises a first lid and a second lid, wherein the first lid and the second lid are both removably attached to the side wall. The body portion and the first lid form a first compartment and the body portion and the second lid form a second compartment. According to the invention, the first compartment and the second compartment are located on opposite sides of the base wall. Thus, the openings of the first and the second compartment are also arranged on opposite sides of the container.

[0006] The arrangement of the openings of the compartments on opposite sides of the base wall discourages the consumer from having both compartments open at the same time. With one compartment closed, the risk of contaminating the consumer items, or mixing the items in the compartments is decreased.

[0007] The first compartment and the second compartment may be of substantially the same size as each other, but preferably, the first compartment and the second compartment are of different size and have a different volume.

[0008] The first lid and the second lid are both removable from the body portion. This means that when the lid is opened in order to open the corresponding compartment, the lid does not remain connected to the body portion but is entirely separate, or detached from it. This

simplifies the production and assembly process for the container, since it is not necessary to incorporate means for permanently connecting the lid to the body portion, such as a hinge.

[0009] The base wall is a flat or curved wall that is surrounded on all sides by the side wall. The side wall may consist of one surface, for example surrounding a circular base wall. Alternatively, the side wall may comprise a number of discrete surfaces, for example three for a triangular base wall or four for a rectangular base wall. The side walls may be substantially perpendicular to the base wall. Alternatively, the side wall may be inclined towards or away from the base wall, for example if the container is tapered in the direction perpendicular to the base wall.

[0010] The first lid and the second lid are preferably separate, that is, they are not attached or linked to each other in any way. The structure of the lids can therefore be relatively simple compared to the structure of the containers of the prior art, where the lids are connected to each other. One advantage of a simplified lid structure is that the manufacture and assembly processes may be further simplified and more efficient. A further advantage is that each lid can be more easily removed and replaced. Since the lids are not attached to each other, the risk of inadvertently opening one compartment whilst attempting to open the other compartment is also minimised.

[0011] Preferably, the base wall of the body portion is curved such that the first compartment comprises a section of the base wall that is convex. A curved base wall adds structural strength to the container.

[0012] Preferably, the second compartment comprises on the other side of the base wall, the corresponding section of the base wall. On this side of the base wall, the section of the base wall is concave. This means that the volume missing in the first compartment due to the convex form of the section of the base wall substantially adds to the volume of the second compartment. In a particularly preferred embodiment, the second compartment is solely formed by the concave surface of the curved base wall and the second lid. Preferably, a circumferential section of the base wall comes into contact with the surface of the lid to form an airtight seal when the second compartment is closed.

[0013] The first lid, or the second lid, or both lids may close their respective compartments by fitting over the side wall of the body portion. Alternatively, the first lid, or the second lid, or both lids may close their respective compartments by fitting within the side wall of the body portion.

[0014] Each lid preferably remains in a closed position until a positive force is applied by the consumer to remove that lid from the body portion. This ensures that the lids are not inadvertently separated from the container between uses. Advantageously, the lids may remain in the closed position due to the tight fit of the lid on the body portion and the friction between the contacting surfaces of the respective lid and the side wall of the body portion.

For example, if a lid fits over the body portion, it may be provided with an inner cross section of substantially the same shape and size as the outer cross section of the body portion over which it fits. Alternatively, if the lid fits within the corresponding opening, it may be provided with an outer cross section of substantially the same size and shape as the cross section of that opening. Preferably, at least one of the contacting surfaces is a high friction surface. For example, at least one of the contacting surfaces may be roughened compared to the remaining surfaces of the container.

[0015] Alternatively, or in addition, at least one of the first lid and second lid further comprises retention means for locking that lid in the closed position. The retention means may be provided on the body portion, or the lid, or both the body portion and the lid. The retention means may be provided for one, or both of the lids. The retention means may comprise, for example, one or more annular flanges on one of the contacting surfaces, which engages with one or more correspondingly positioned grooves, on the other contacting surface. With this type of retention means, the lid can be removed from the container by pulling the lid away from the rest of the container in order to disengage the flange from the groove.

[0016] Particularly preferably, the contacting surfaces are provided with corresponding screw threads which engage with each other when the lid is closed. The screw threads may be single helical threads, or alternatively may be provided by at least two circumferentially spaced apart portions of a screw thread.

[0017] The first lid and the second lid may be provided with the same, or different retention means.

[0018] Containers according to the invention are preferably substantially cylindrical in shape, with the body portion and each lid having a substantially circular outer cross section. Alternatively, the body portion and lids of containers according to the invention may be substantially prismatic or pyramidal in shape with, for example, a substantially triangular, rectangular or oval cross section. Preferably, the height of the first lid and the second lid each is about a third of the height of the entire closed container. Alternatively, the first lid and the second lid have a different height in order to distinguish the two lids.

[0019] Optionally, the container may comprise means for distinguishing the first lid from the second lid. For example, the lids may be of different colour, or the container may be printed, embossed or otherwise marked with indicia to indicate which compartment contains which type of two possible consumer items. This is particularly useful where one of the compartments is intended to store used consumer items, whereas the other compartment is intended to store fresh or non-used consumer items.

[0020] The container according to the invention may be formed from any suitable materials including, but not limited to cardboard, plastic, metal or combinations thereof. The body portion may be formed from a different material to the lids, or the body portion and lids may all be formed from the same material. The first and second lid

each may be formed from a different material but preferably, the first and second lids are formed from the same material. Particularly preferably, this material is different to the material from which the body portion is formed. For example, in a preferred embodiment, the body portion is made from moulded plastic while the first and second lids are made of metal.

[0021] Preferably, the body portion includes a substantially transparent portion for viewing the contents of at least one of the first and second compartments. This allows one to see how many of the consumer items remain in the container, without the need to remove the lid. In a preferred embodiment, the body portion is made from a substantially transparent plastic material. Preferably, the body portion of the container is injection moulded from a material selected from the group consisting of polypropylene, polyethylene, polystyrene, nylon, polysulfone, polyester, polyurethane, and combinations thereof. Alternatively, the body portion is made from glass.

[0022] For example, the first and the second compartment may be used to store consumer items that differ in flavour, colour or texture. Alternatively, one compartment may be used to store accessories for use in combination with the consumer items. Alternatively, one compartment may be used to store discarded packaging material or used consumer items.

[0023] Advantageously, the provision of a second compartment enables the temporary storage of used items in the container until it is possible to dispose of them appropriately. As the second compartment is separate from the first compartment and the compartments are closed by separate lids it is ensured that the unused items are not contaminated or otherwise adversely affected by the used items.

[0024] The container of the present invention finds particular application as a container for the storage of products that deliver oral sensations. More particularly, the container is suitable for flavour pouches for oral delivery of one or more selected flavourants including tobacco. Typically, a flavour pouch comprises an external wrapper that encloses a flavour source. An example of a flavour pouch is a snus pouch. A snus pouch is a tobacco material encased in a pouch material, wherein the tobacco material may include tobacco, water and salt, as well as additives, such as non-tobacco flavourants and humectants.

[0025] The container is preferably offered with the first compartment filled with the unused consumer items and the second compartment empty. In a particularly preferred embodiment, the first compartment is filled with flavour pouches and the second compartment is empty.

[0026] Once filled with the consumer items, the compartment housing the consumer items is preferably sealed in order to maintain freshness of the consumer items. For example, a plastic or foil layer may be sealed over the top edge of the first compartment. Preferably, such a sealing layer includes a tab, or other means for enabling the easy removal of the layer.

[0027] The invention will be further described, by way of example only, with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

Figure 1 shows a perspective view of a closed container according to the present invention;

Figure 2 shows a cross section of the closed container of Figure 1;

Figure 3 shows a perspective view of the container of Figure 1 with the first lid removed from the container; and

Figure 4 shows a perspective view of the container of Figure 1 with the second lid removed from the container.

[0028] The container 2 shown in Figures 1 to 4 is substantially cylindrical in shape and comprises a plastic body portion 4, a first metal lid 6 and a second metal lid 8. The first lid 6 and the second 8 lid are fitted over opposite ends of the body portion 4.

[0029] As can be seen from Figure 2, the body portion 4 comprises a circular base wall 10 and an annular side wall 12 extending perpendicularly from the edge of the base wall 10. The base wall 10, the side wall 12 and the first lid 6 define the first compartment 14. The base wall 10 is curved and is convex towards the opening of the first compartment 14. The concave surface of the base wall 10 on the opposite side from the first compartment 14 forms a recess, which defines together with the second lid 8 a second compartment 16. The second compartment 16 is significantly smaller than the first compartment 14.

[0030] The first lid 6 comprises a circular top wall 18 and an annular side wall 20 extending perpendicularly from the edge of the top wall 18. When fitted over the side wall 12 of the body portion 4, the first lid 6 closes the first compartment 14.

[0031] Similarly, the second lid 8 comprises a circular top wall 22 and an annular side wall 24 extending perpendicularly from the edge of the top wall 22. When fitted over the side wall 12 of the body portion 4 adjacent the base wall 10, the second lid 8 closes the second compartment 16.

[0032] As can be seen from Figure 2, the side wall 12 of the body portion 4 comprises an annular central portion 26 and first 28 and second 30 recessed annular portions on either side of the central portion 26. As can be seen from Figure 1, the central portion 26 remains visible when both of the lids 6, 8 are in place.

[0033] The first 28 and second 30 recessed annular portions are of a reduced diameter compared to the central portion. The difference in diameter between the central portion 26 and the first 28 and second 30 portions is approximately equal to the thickness of the side walls 20, 24 of the lids 6, 8. Thus, when the first 6 and second 8 lids are in place on the body portion 4, the side walls 20, 24 thereof overlie the first 28 and second 30 annular portions of the side wall 12 of the body portion, respectively.

In this closed position, the side walls 20, 24 of the lids 6, 8 are flush with the central annular portion 26 of the side wall 12 of the body portion 4.

[0034] As can be seen from Figure 3, the first recessed annular portion 28 of the side wall 12 of the body portion 4 includes a plurality of projections 32 extending circumferentially around the body portion. The first lid 6 comprises an annular flange, or lip, at the edge of the side wall 20 thereof, which engages with the projections 32 on the body portion 4 to retain the first lid in the closed position. In order to remove the first lid 6, pressure must be applied on opposite sides of the lid 6 to pull the lid 6 away from the body portion 4.

[0035] As can be seen from Figure 4, the second recessed annular portion 30 of the side wall 12 of the body portion 4 includes an external screw thread extending circumferentially around it. The inner surface of the side wall 24 of the second lid 8 includes a corresponding screw thread, which engages with the external screw thread on the body portion 4 to retain the second lid 8 in a closed position. In order to remove the second lid 8, the second lid 8 must be turned relative to the body portion 4 by approximately a quarter of a turn in an anticlockwise direction. Conversely, to replace the second lid 8, it must be turned relative to the body portion 4 by approximately a quarter of a turn in the clockwise direction.

Claims

1. A container (2) comprising:

a body portion (4) consisting of a side wall (12) and a base wall (10);
a first lid (6), wherein the body portion (4) and the first lid (6) form a first compartment (14); and
a second lid (8), wherein the body portion (4) and the second lid (8) form a second compartment (16),

wherein the first lid (6) and the second lid (8) are both removably attached to the side wall (12) and wherein the first compartment (14) and the second compartment (16) are located on opposite sides of the base wall (10).

2. A container (2) according to claim 1 wherein the base wall (10) is curved such that the first compartment (14) comprises a section of the base wall (10) that is convex and the second compartment (16) comprises the same section of the base wall (10) that is concave.

3. A container (2) according to claim 1 or 2 comprising retention means (32) associated with at least one lid (6)(8) for locking that lid in a closed position.

4. A container (2) according to any preceding claim

wherein the body portion (4) further comprises a substantially transparent portion (26) suitable for displaying the contents of at least one of the first (14) and second (16) compartments.

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5. A container (2) according to any preceding claim, wherein at least one of the first lid (6), the second lid (8) and the body portion (4) have a circular cross section.

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6. A container (2) according to claim 5 wherein the first lid (6), the second lid (8) and the body portion (4) have a circular cross section and wherein the outer diameters of the first lid (6), the second lid (8) and the body portion (4) are substantially the same.

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7. A container (2) according to any preceding claim, wherein the first lid (6) and the second lid (8) have different opening mechanisms.

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8. A container (2) according to any preceding claim, wherein the container (2) comprises flavour pouches.

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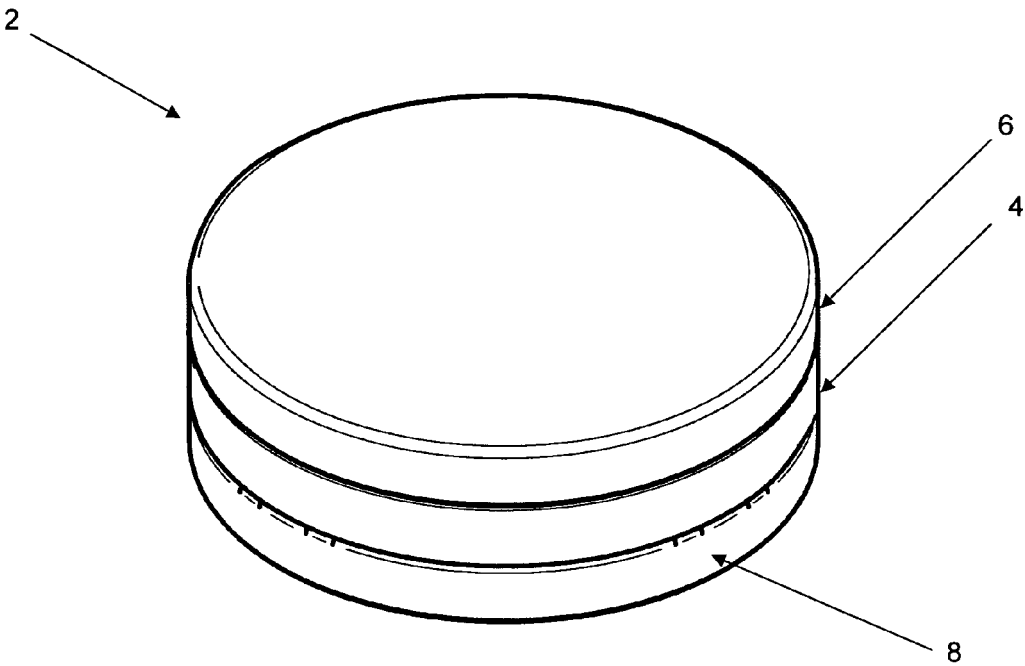


Figure 1

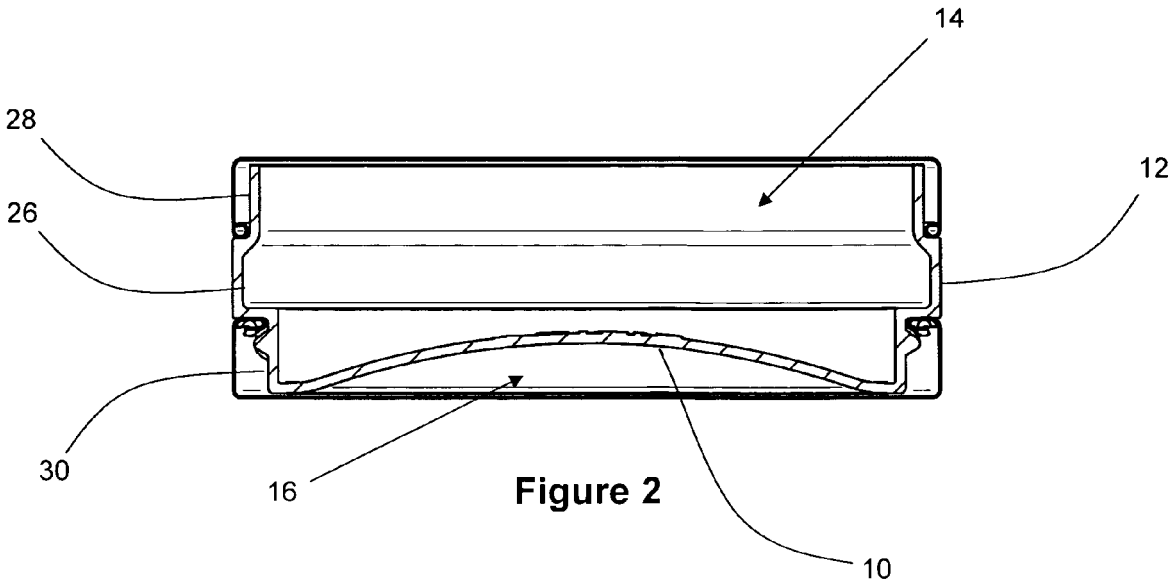


Figure 2

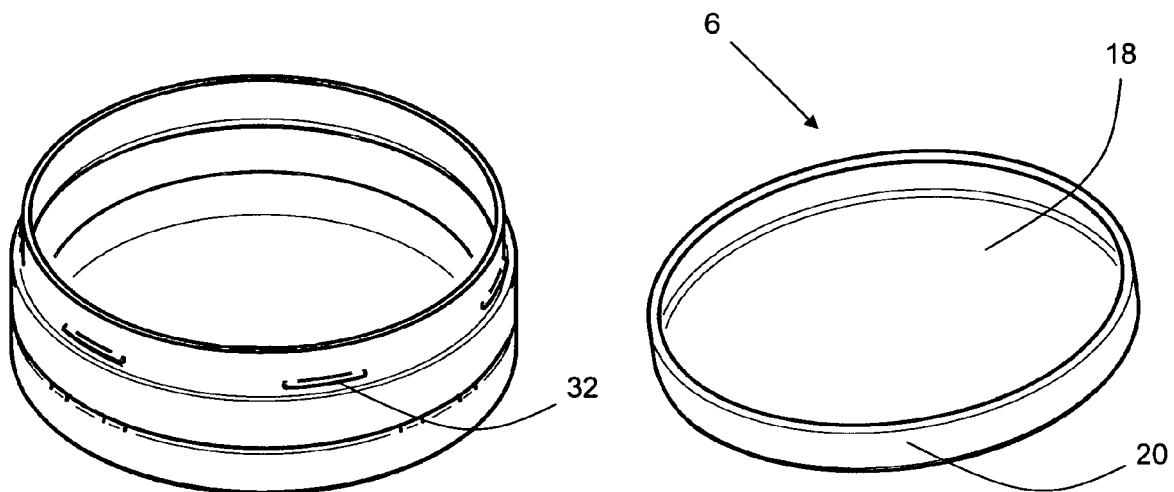


Figure 3

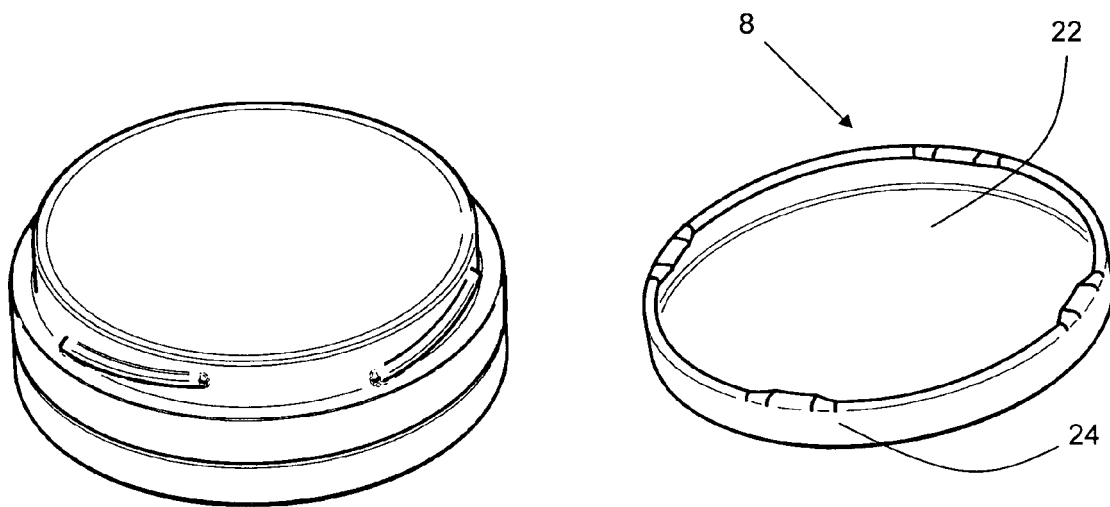


Figure 4



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Application Number
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Place of search Munich		Date of completion of the search 6 February 2009	Examiner Duc, Emmanuel
CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS X : particularly relevant if taken alone Y : particularly relevant if combined with another document of the same category A : technological background O : non-written disclosure P : intermediate document T : theory or principle underlying the invention E : earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date D : document cited in the application L : document cited for other reasons & : member of the same patent family, corresponding document			

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EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 08 25 2935

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**ANNEX TO THE EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT
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