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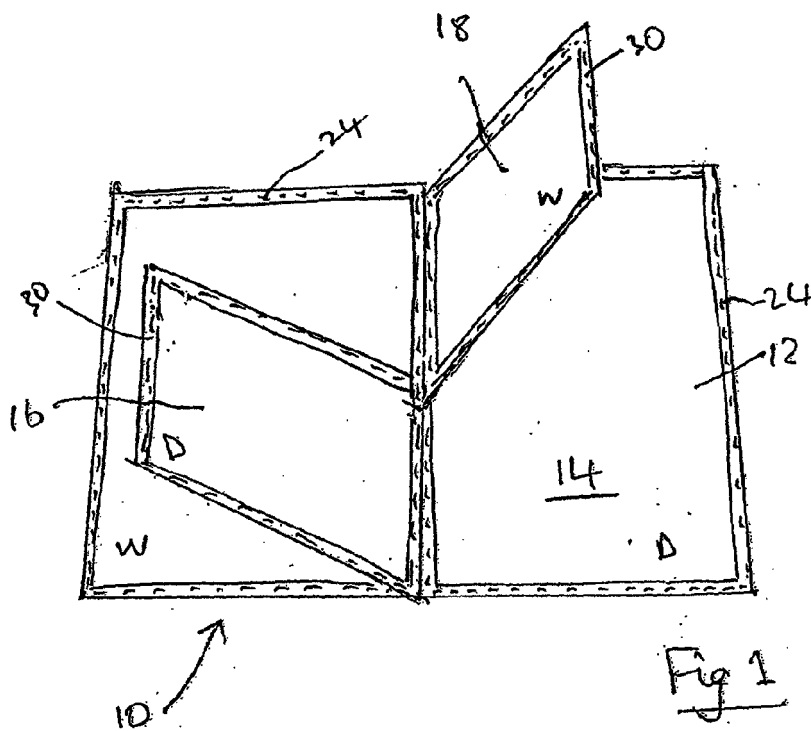
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(54) **Changing mat**

(57) A changing mat (10) comprising a planar base (12) having an upper side (14) one or more planar covers (16, 18) each hinged to the base (12) and moveable from respective first positions adjacent the base (12) where they cover a first continuous portion of the upper side

(14) of the base 912) to respective second positions adjacent the base (12) where cover a second continuous portion of the upper side (14) of the base 912). The mat enables a person to dry themselves on a surface which may get wet during the process and then dress comfortably on a newly exposed dry surface.



Description

[0001] The present invention relates to changing mats and for particular, but not exclusively, use by a person who is wet, for example because of bathing or showering. Embodiments of the changing mat of the present invention may also be used as a sports bag or a groundsheet.

[0002] There is sometimes a difficulty in changing and drying oneself having taken a shower at a public facility, e.g. swimming pool, gym, campsite.

[0003] With limited space generally being available in the average changing room, showering and subsequently drying oneself is usually difficult and cumbersome. Changing into one's clothes without the clothes getting wet, by making contact with the wet floor, is often impossible. Further, it is also often difficult to keep one's feet dry when changing as standing on a wet floor is often unavoidable. This leads to further difficulty and nuisance as drying feet and dressing whilst trying to avoid a wet floor is very awkward.

[0004] The present invention seeks to provide a changing mat which avoids these difficulties in use. Accordingly, the present invention provides a changing mat comprising a planar base having an upper side and one or more planar covers each hinged to the base and pivotable from respective first positions adjacent the base where they cover a first continuous portion of the upper side of the base to respective second positions adjacent the base where they cover a second continuous portion of the upper side of the base.

[0005] Embodiments of the present invention enable a person to dry themselves and then dress comfortably on a dry surface and resolves the above-described and longstanding problem that, although is not serious, is generally a nuisance and irritation to many people.

[0006] The changing mat of the present invention can also be used as a sports bag to transport equipment such as clothes and towels. The bag is created using appropriate fixings to either side of the mat and arranged such that when the fixings are connected together the mat becomes a bag.

[0007] In a further embodiment, the lower planar base is formed so that can be extended beyond the portions coverable by the covers to create a waterproof groundsheet/surface between the ground and the user, to isolate the user from a wet or dirty surface.

[0008] The covers may be dimensioned such that first and second portions of the upper side of the base are different halves of the upper side of the base.

[0009] It is most convenient that there are two, only, planar covers but the invention may employ one, two or more hinged covers.

[0010] The changing mat according to the present invention is, conveniently, rectangular but other planar shapes may be readily employed if desired.

[0011] It is preferable that each planar cover overlaps, or is overlapped by, an adjacent planar cover when all the planar covers are in their first or second positions. If

there are three or more covers the overlapping should be such the covers can be moved from their first positions to their second positions in a consecutive order starting from one or other of the two endmost covers.

[0012] The base and planar members may be formed, for example, from PVC sheets covering a foam sheet or simply a double layer of PVC material with the covers stitched to the base so as to be hinged and pivotable relative to it. Other suitable materials for the base and planar members may be used, eg a fabric, polythene, or a plastics material.

[0013] The base may comprise two base portions connected by a planar connector, the edges the base portions and the connector defining the channel with one edge of each planar member fixed to base at the channel.

[0014] To add value, a product to be used by a commercial concern may also incorporate a point of sale type" advertising/marketing pouch which provides a water resistant area on the mat to display marketing messages to the mat users. The pouch should have the flexibility to allow replacement of the marketing material, and so provide an additional ongoing source of revenue generation for a business, by allowing them to sell advertising space via an additional, alternative medium.

[0015] Embodiments of the present invention will now be described, by way of example only, with reference to the accompanying drawings of which:

Figure 1 is a schematic perspective view of a first embodiment of a changing mat according to the present invention;

Figure 2 is a schematic plan view of a second embodiment of a changing mat according to the present invention;

Figure 3 is a schematic end view of the embodiment of Figure 2;

Figure 4 is a schematic end view of a part of third embodiment of a changing mat according to the present invention;

Figure 5 is a schematic end view of a fourth embodiment of a changing mat which can be folded to form a sports bag; and

Figure 6 is a schematic end view of a fifth embodiment of a changing mat which can be extended to form a groundsheet.

[0016] Referring to Figure 1, a changing mat 10 comprises a rectangular planar base 12 having an upper side 14 to which are hinged a pair of planar covers 16 and 18 each of which can be independently pivoted to cover respective portions of the upper side 14 of the base 12. In this particular embodiment the portions coverable by the covers 16, 18 are different quarters of the rectangular

upper side 14 of the base 12. Referring also to Figure 3 The base 12 is formed from two pieces of foam sheet 20 covered on both sides by a respective PVC sheet 22 which is stitched with stitches 24 around the periphery and across a centre line to form two, foam-filled compartments. The covers 16, 18 are similarly formed from foam sheets 26 and PVC sheets 28 and stitches 30. Ends of the covers 16, 18 are stitched to a centre line of the base 12 to form hinges and such that cover 16 overlaps cover 18 when both are covering the right hand side of the base 12 (when viewed as illustrated in Figures 1 and 2). Alternatively or additionally, the PVC sheets may be welded to form the edges of the compartments and the hinge connections.

[0017] The shape of the base's upper side does not need to be rectangular, nor need the cover portions be able to cover, collectively, all of the upper side 14 to gain the benefits of the invention.

[0018] The two planer sides of each of the covers 16, 18 and the two halves of the upper side 14 of the base 12 are conveniently made distinguishable as one side of each is to be used when the user is wet and the other side when the user has dried off. Colour coding is particularly convenient. The colours of the surfaces can be flexible, yet need to be easily distinguishable. Blue and yellow colours are suitable choices due to their clear, distinguishable difference and the fact that the colours are closely linked in the human mind, to the terms: "wet" with Blue = Water and "dry" with Yellow = Sun/Sand.

[0019] In Figure 1, the sides for wet use are the sides of the covers 16, 18 that are uppermost when covering the right side of the base 12 together with the uncovered left half of the base 12 and the visible ones in Figure 1 are marked "W". These surfaces will, for convenience of description, be referred to as the "wet" surfaces as references to the state of the user using those surfaces and is not a reference to the state of the surfaces themselves. The other half of the base and the other sides of the covers are the "dry" surfaces and the visible ones in Figure 1 are marked "D".

[0020] The 'wet' surfaces are used when a person has just returned from a shower/ swimming pool. The entire "wet" surfaces are used until the person has dried themselves to the point that only their feet are still wet. This is the with the covers 16, 18 covering the right hand half of the upper side 14 side of the base 12. At this point the person folds the cover 16 of the changing mat over to the left, i.e. leaving the top left half of the "wet" surface of the base 12 still showing but now the lower right half of upper side 14, the "dry" surface of the base 12, is exposed as is the "dry" side of the cover 16.

[0021] Whilst still standing on the upper, "wet" side of the cover 18 and portion of the base 12 the person dries their first foot. At this point the person then steps on the lower "dry" surfaces with the dry foot and dries the second foot. At the point where the person is fully dry (including both feet) the user then steps completely onto the lower, "dry" surfaces and fold the cover 18 over to the left so

exposing the remaining (uncovered to this point) half of the "dry" side of the upper side 14 of the base 12. This provides that there is now uppermost all the "dry" surfaces of the base 12 and covers 16, 18 allowing the person to dress easily without the difficulty of trying to keep their clothes and body dry.

[0022] When a user changes clothes when dry, eg prior to taking part in a leisure activity or before taking a shower, the mat is arranged with the covers positioned so all the "dry" surfaces are exposed.

[0023] Referring now to Figure 2, the construction of the base 12 and covers 16, 18 is as in Figure 1 and the same reference numerals are used for the same features. The embodiment of Figure 2 additionally has carry handles 40 as an aid when transporting the mat when the two halves of the base portion are folded together.

[0024] A pair of straps 42 fixed to left hand side of the base 12 and pads (not shown) fixed to the right hand side of the base 12 made of loop and hook materials, eg Velcro (RTM), enable the mat to be held closed in a packed configuration in a compact position for transportation when the base 12 is folded fully in half and held together by the straps 20 and pads. Loop and hook materials are preferably used due to their 'water-compatibility' and so allow adhesion of the two straps and pads even when wet.

[0025] Transparent plastics pouches 44 are fixed to the upper side 14 of the base 12 on both the "dry" and "wet" sides providing a water resistant location for marketing material to be located and so offering potential for additional revenue generation by selling advertising space when the mats are provided by commercial establishments for use by their customers.

[0026] As shown in Figure 4, the two flexible cover sections may, an alternative to the simple overlapping of the covers 16, 18 of Figures 1 be provided with interlinking lips 46 which cooperate to form an overlapping, water-tight seal which runs the full length of the adjacent sides of the covers.

[0027] Various sizes of mat may be provided. A smaller mat, eg for personal use, will preferably be readily portable and able to be folded into a compact size for easy transportation. A larger version for commercial use may be provided which would be less portable, as its aim is to be permanently positioned in a changing room area, and will therefore not require much moving.

[0028] The mat may be accompanied by a wiper blade (not shown) in a purpose built pocket attached to the mat. The purpose of the blade is to wipe the surface dry and remove any excess water following changing. The blade can also be used to clear the surface of the "dry" side of the mat 12 and covers 16, 18 should any water be present.

[0029] The surfaces of the base and covers may be a slightly rough to help with stability and give it non-slip characteristics when wet.

[0030] According to a further embodiment, illustrated in Figure 5, the mat includes male poppers 50 and female

poppers 52 to allow the mat to assume the shape of an open ended bag which can then be used as a sports bag, providing the ability to carry equipment such as towels and clothes thus negating the need to carry a dedicated additional sports bag. In this embodiment the base and covers are of PVC sheeting with no foam padding or advertising pouch. This provides a more flexible mat that is more easily folded to enable the poppers to be joined together to create a sports bag. The poppers may be either plastic or metal material.

[0031] According to a further embodiment, illustrated in Figure 6, the mat includes a portion 54 that can be extended to create a waterproof groundsheet/surface between the ground and the user so as to isolate the user from a wet or dirty surface. An extended lower planar base (extended to provide either child or adult length) can provide a waterproof surface between the ground and the user, for the purposes of, but not limited to, sleeping, exercising or sitting.

[0032] The changing mat of the present may be made from materials other than of the illustrative embodiments of Figures 1 to 4. Use of an absorbent fabric material, for example, which can be readily dried after use is more flexible and so easier to fold up for transport.

[0033] If the mat is made of a thin (no internal foam padding), completely flexible design, then it can be folded or rolled into a compact size for transportation or storage.

[0034] Other internal materials may be used should the design be required to be rigid. A solid insert e.g. solid PVC or wood would provide the desired rigidity.

[0035] The flexible joint design can take alternative forms to the illustrated stitched and/or welded described as may be convenient.

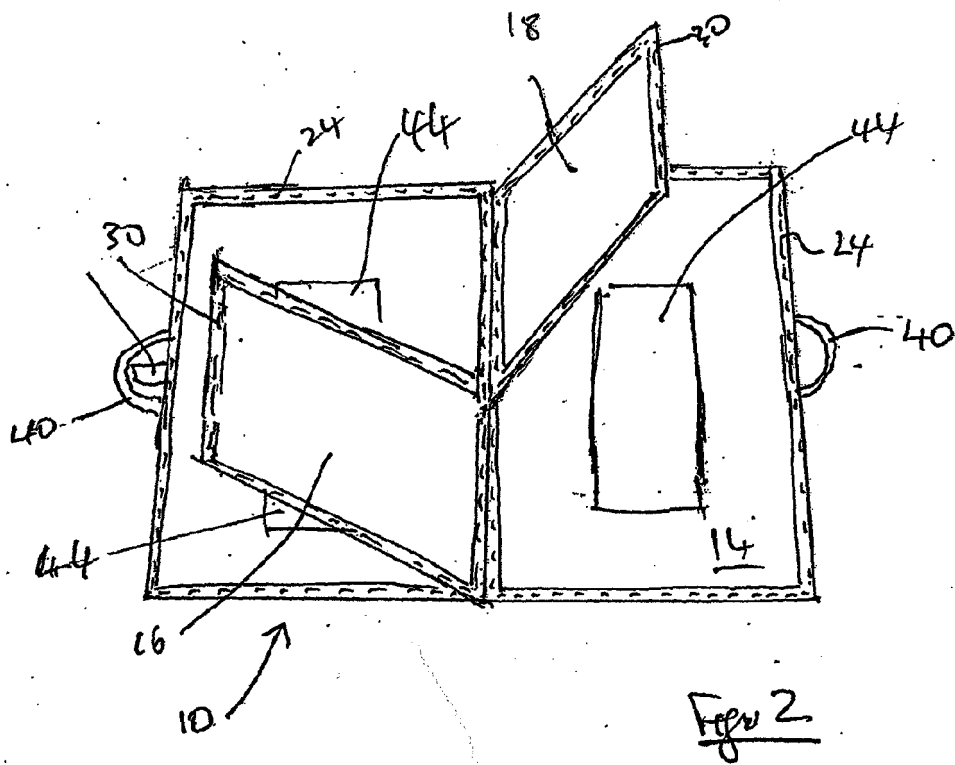
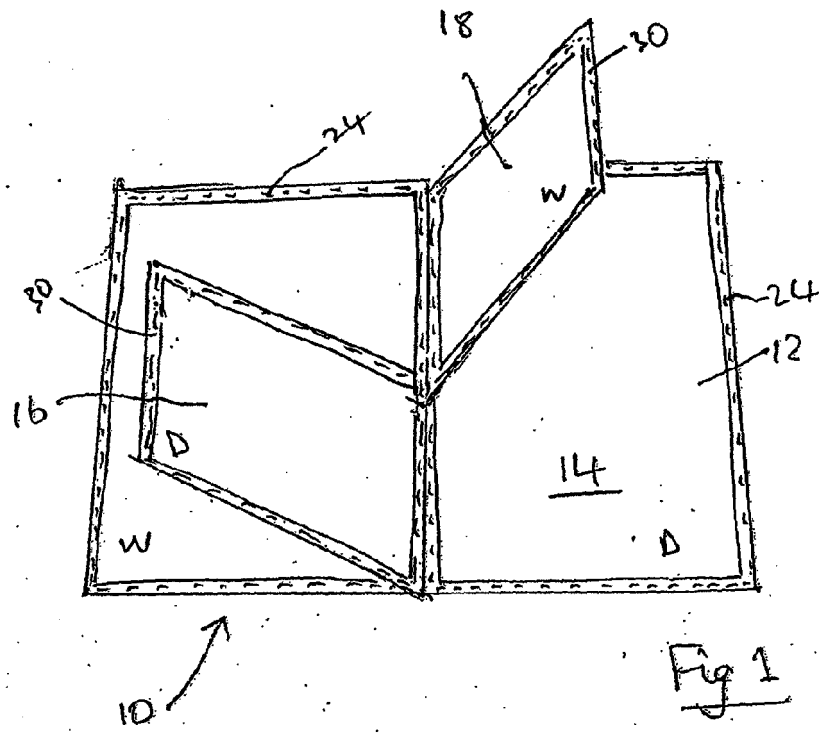
[0036] The changing mat of the present invention can also be designed for use as a sports bag to transport equipment such as clothes and towels. The bag is created using fastenings to either side of the mat arranged such that when the fixings are connected together the mat becomes a sports bag, preferably with two separate compartments (dry/clean, wet/dirty).

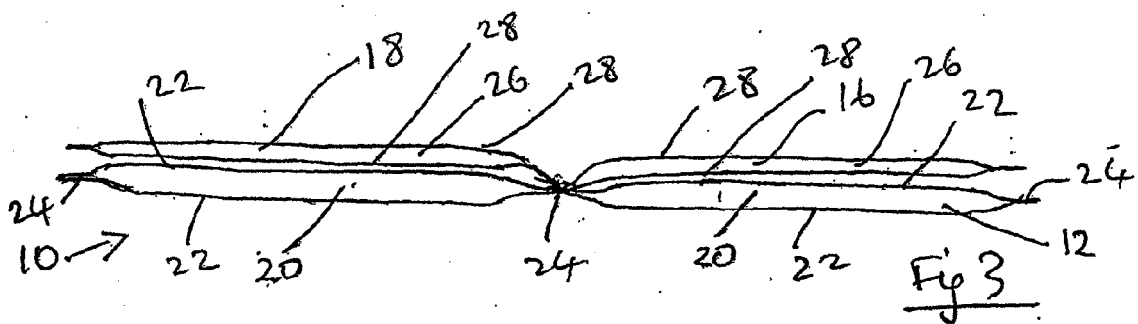
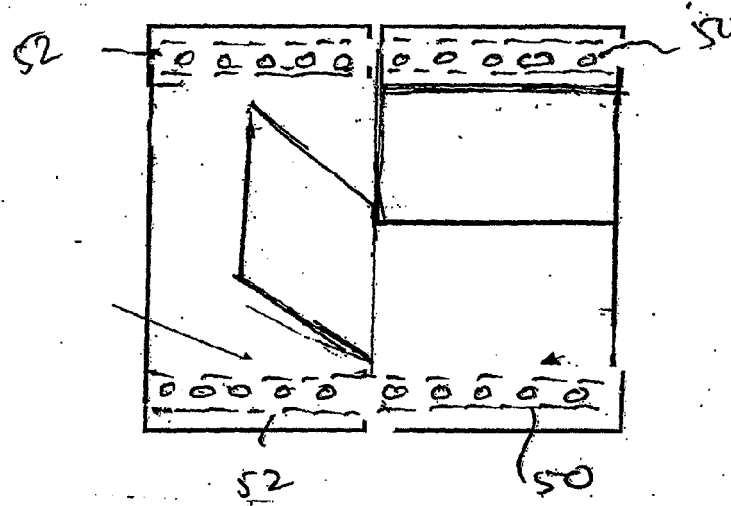
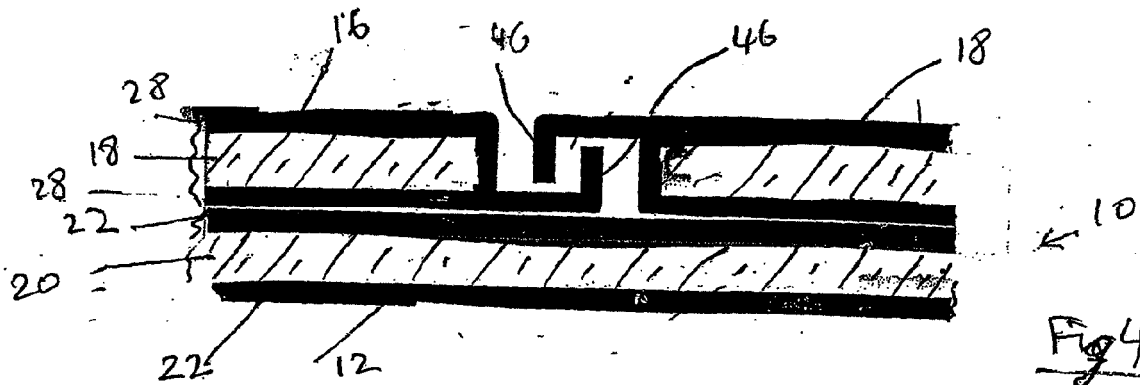
covers being hinged at a centre-line of the base.

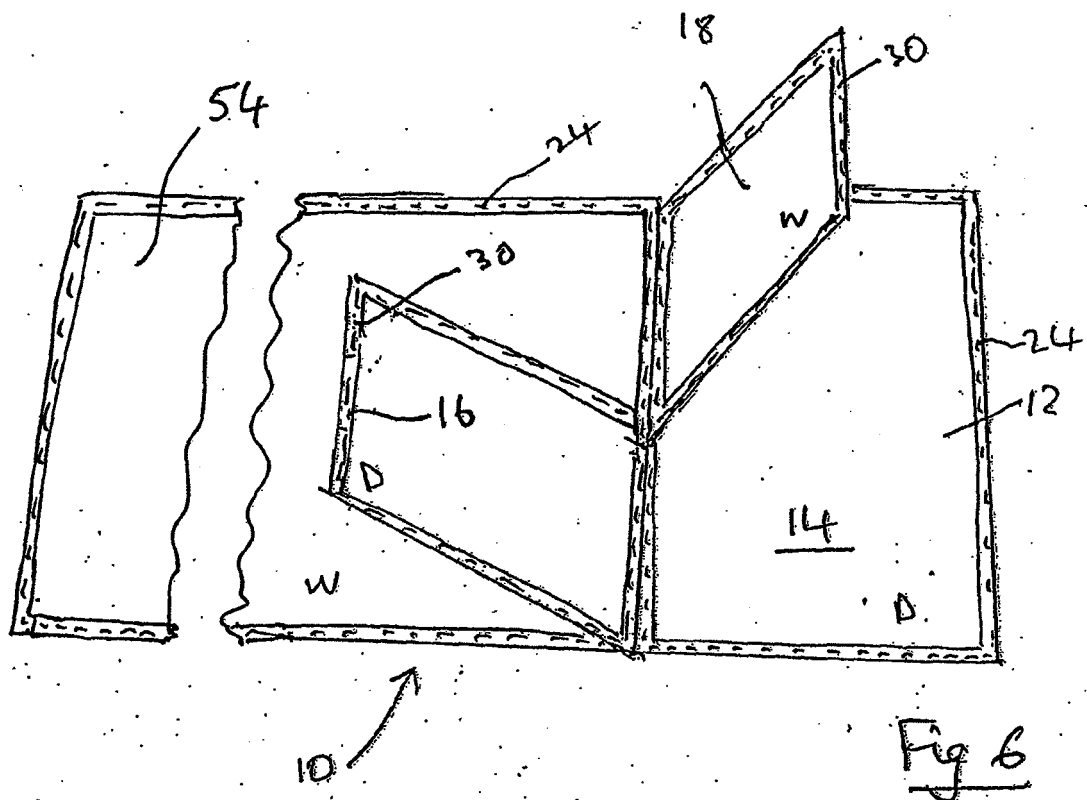
3. A changing mat as claimed in claim 1 or 2, in which there are two, only, planar members.
4. A changing mat as claimed in any preceding claim in which the base and covers are rectangular.
5. A changing mat as claimed in any preceding claim, in which adjacent covers overlap when all the covers are in their first or second positions.
6. A changing mat as claimed in any preceding claim in which the base and covers are formed from PVC covered foam.
7. A changing mat as claimed in claim 6 in which the base includes a transverse channel and one edge of each cover is fixed to base at the channel.
8. A changing mat as claimed in claim 7 in which the base comprises two base portions connected by a planar connector, the edges the base portions and the connector defining the channel.
9. A changing mat as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 5, in which the base and covers are formed of a fabric, polythene, or a plastics material.
10. A changing mat as claimed in any preceding claim including fastening means located along two opposite edges of the planar base such that the edges of the mat can be fastened together to form a bag.
11. A changing mat as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 9, the planar base including a portion that can be extended from the portions of the base coverable by the covers mat to form a groundsheet

Claims

1. A changing mat comprising:
 - a planar base having an upper side; and
 - one or more planar covers each hinged to the base and pivotable from respective first positions adjacent the base where they cover a first continuous portion of the upper side of the base to respective second positions adjacent the base where they cover a second continuous portion of the upper side of the base.
2. A changing mat as claimed in claim 1 in which the first and second portions of the upper side of the base are distinct halves of the upper surface, the









EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 10 19 0466

DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT			
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Place of search The Hague		Date of completion of the search 29 April 2011	Examiner van Overbeek, Kajsa
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**ANNEX TO THE EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT
ON EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION NO.**

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This annex lists the patent family members relating to the patent documents cited in the above-mentioned European search report. The members are as contained in the European Patent Office EDP file on
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