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(54) **CONTAINER FOR HOLDING SMALL ITEMS**

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Description

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

[0001] The present invention relates generally to a closable storage container for holding small items, and more particularly, to a container adapted to closely hold a nestable sealed packet, with the container closed by a tightly fitting lid.

2. Description of the Prior Art

[0002] Various types of closable storage containers or packages are in use at the present time to hold consumer product items such as smokeless tobacco, breath mints, medication, throat lozenges, candy, and the like. One form of package is a formed metal "tin" comprising a bottom enclosure and a tightly fitting lid. Such a package may be expensive to make, and may not provide a perfectly air-tight seal. Furthermore the metal construction does not provide any view of the contents of the "tin."

SUMMARY

[0003] It is an object of the subject disclosure to provide a package or container for holding small product items that is easy to manufacture, provides excellent sealing to retain product freshness, and allows the consumer to see what is inside the unopened container.

[0004] The present disclosure is directed to a package for holding product items including a top or lid with a close fit to a bottom or housing. In some embodiments, the housing is adapted to receive and retain a container liner. In some embodiments the container liner is at least partly transparent. In some embodiments the housing comprises a display aperture which allows the contents to be seen even when the lid is closed upon the housing. Variations of the illustrative embodiment, including variations in the shape of the lid, housing, or liner, or the shape, size and location of any aperture, are also within the contemplation of the present invention and are further described below.

[0005] It should be appreciated that the present invention can be implemented and utilized in numerous ways, including without limitation as a process, an apparatus, a system, a device, and a method for applications and from other suitable materials now known and later developed. These and other unique features of the system disclosed herein will become more readily apparent from the following description and the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0006] So that those having ordinary skill in the art to which the disclosed system appertains will more readily

understand how to make and use the same, reference may be had to the following drawings.

[0007] FIGURES 1A and 1B are perspective views of a prior art container for holding product items, comprising a metal housing and a metal lid;

[0008] FIGURE 2 is a perspective view of a container according to the invention comprising a plastic housing and a metal lid;

[0009] FIGURE 3 is a cross section detail of a fit between the plastic housing and metal lid;

[0010] FIGURE 4 is a perspective view of another container comprising a plastic housing and a metal lid;

[0011] FIGURE 5A is a perspective view of a housing and an insertable liner;

[0012] FIGURE 5B is a side elevation view of the housing and liner of FIGURE 5A;

[0013] FIGURE 5C is a cross section detail of portions of housing and liner of FIGURE 5A;

[0014] FIGURE 5D is a cross section detail of the same portions of housing and liner shown in FIGURE 5C, joined together as an assembly; and

[0015] FIGURES 6A and 6B are bottom perspective views of containers having a display aperture in the housing.

DESCRIPTION OF EXEMPLARY EMBODIMENTS

[0016] The present invention overcomes many of the prior art problems associated with all-metal "tins" for holding small product items. The advantages, and other features of the package disclosed herein, will become more readily apparent to those having ordinary skill in the art from the following detailed description of certain preferred embodiments taken in conjunction with the drawings which set forth representative embodiments of the present invention and wherein like reference numerals identify similar structural elements whenever possible.

[0017] All relative descriptions herein such as left, right, up, down, topside, underside and the like are with reference to the Figures, and not meant in a limiting sense. Smokeless tobacco pouches are used as exemplary contents of the package. The illustrated embodiments can be understood as providing exemplary features of varying detail of certain embodiments, and therefore, unless otherwise specified, features, components, modules, elements, and/or aspects of the illustrations can be otherwise combined, interconnected, sequenced, separated, interchanged, positioned, and/or rearranged without materially departing from the disclosed systems or methods. Additionally, the shapes and sizes of components are also exemplary and unless otherwise specified, can be altered without materially affecting or limiting the disclosed technology to holding tobacco products.

[0018] The package comprises a top or lid and a housing or bottom. FIGURES 1A and 1B show, in closed and open configuration respectively, a prior art container 10 that for product items such as tobacco pouches 1. Container 10 comprises a lid 20 and housing 30, both being

metal. Lid 20 typically has a tight friction fit onto housing 30. Lid 20 may have a slightly rounded or domed top, main surface 22. Lid walls 24 are substantially vertical and fit closely around and over housing upper walls 34, also substantially vertical. The housing may have a circumferential ledge 32 that stops the lid walls 24 from being pressed too far down over housing upper walls 34, which might otherwise make it difficult to reopen the container. Instead of circumferential ledge 32, there may be a circumferential ridge around housing 30. Below the circumferential ledge 32 there may extend a housing lower wall 31.

[0019] FIGURE 2 shows a novel container 11, which may comprise the same lid 20, but a different housing such as molded plastic housing 40 that may be made, for example, by injection molding. Plastic housing 40 may have a floor 45 and sides comprising a lower wall 41 extending upward to circumferential ledge 42 and continuing upward as housing upper wall 44. The lid walls 24 may fit around and over housing upper wall 44. Circumferential ledge 42 may provide an abutment stop to prevent lid walls 24 from being pressed too far down over housing upper walls 44, which might otherwise make it difficult to reopen the container. While being described as "circumferential" it will be understood that the ledge may be discontinuous and may not extend entirely around the housing. To help retain lid 20 on housing 40, one or more detents 46 are provided on the outer surface of housing upper wall 44. Housing 40 comprises a top flange 48 at the top surface of housing upper wall 44. In some embodiments, product contents within the container may be sealed for freshness or safety, for example by sealing a foil or film (not shown) onto top flange 48.

[0020] FIGURE 3 shows a cross sectional view of lid wall 24 engaging housing upper wall 44. The lower end of lid wall 24 may have an inwardly directed edge such as inward rolled edge 25. Upon pressing the lid onto the housing, the inward rolled edge 25 rides over detent 46 which engages the inwardly directed edge and helps hold the lid on the housing. The lower end of lid wall 24 may then be supported from below by circumferential ledge 42, and held from above by one or more detents 46. To aid in removing the lid, the consumer may press inwardly (as denoted by arrow "A") upon housing lower wall 41, causing the housing wall to flex inward and increasing the clearance between detent 46 and inward rolled edge 25 so that the lid may be lifted off the housing.

[0021] FIGURE 4 shows another novel container 12, which may comprise the same lid 20, but a different housing such as molded plastic housing 50. Plastic housing 50 may have a floor 55 and sides comprising a lower wall 51 extending upward to circumferential ledge 52 and continuing upward as housing upper wall 54. The lid walls 24 may fit around and over housing upper wall 54. Circumferential ledge 52 may provide an abutment stop to prevent lid walls 24 from being pressed too far down over housing upper walls 54, which might otherwise make it difficult to reopen the container. While being described

as "circumferential" it will be understood that the ledge may be discontinuous and may not extend entirely around the housing. To help retain lid 20 on housing 50, one or more detents 56 are provided on the outer surface of housing upper wall 54. One or more of detents 56 may be provided upon more flexible portions of the housing, for example on leaf 57. The periphery of leaf 57 may be partially separated from housing 50. For example the periphery of leaf 57 may define an opening through housing upper wall 54. However, leaf 57 may also be provided without an opening through housing upper wall 54, for example as a thin, platelike protrusion molded into or onto housing 50.

[0022] Housing 50 comprises a top flange 58 at the top surface of housing upper wall 54. In some embodiments, product contents within the container may be sealed for freshness or safety, for example by sealing a foil or film (not shown) onto top flange 58. If the container is sealed in this fashion, then to preserve the effectiveness of the seal, leaf 57 may preferably be provided without defining an opening through housing upper wall 54.

[0023] In order to help ensure freshness of product items, and to facilitate packaging operation, product items inside the container may be packaged within a liner. FIGURE 5A shows a liner, such as tub 70 that may be inserted into housing 60 and then sealed with overseal 80. Housing 60 is in certain aspects similar to housings 40 and 50. and a description of the component parts will not be repeated. Housing floor 65 may be provided with an opening such as display window 63, by which product contents may be seen through tub floor 75, provided tub 70 is made of a transparent material.

[0024] Tub 70 may be formed with tub flange 78, and tub retaining projections 79 that engagingly fit complementary indentations on the inside of housing 60. In the embodiment shown in FIGURE 5A, tub retaining projection 79 may snap-fit into the housing, for example into a recess such as overhanging ledge 69 inside the housing. Such engagement features may securely retain the tub and help protect its contents. As an alternative (not shown), a projection inside the housing may fit into an indentation in the tub.

[0025] FIGURE 5B shows a front elevation view of tub 70 aligned over housing 60. FIGURE 5C shows detail cross sections of the tub showing tub flange 78 and tub retaining projection 79, along with housing top flange 68 and housing overhanging ledge 69. Overhanging ledge 69 may be formed in various shapes and locations. In the example of FIGURE 5C, overhanging ledge 69 may be the inside of circumferential ledge 62. When the tub 70 is inserted in to housing 60, tub retaining projection 79 engages overhanging ledge 69 to hold the tub securely in the housing. Tub flange 78 may rest loose upon housing top flange 68, or it may be sealed thereto. An overseal 80 may be sealed onto the top of tub flange 78, preferably right after filling the tub with product items.

[0026] Tub 70 may be made of vacuum-formed plastic and overseal 80 may be made of foil; both materials may

be chosen to provide barrier properties (such as moisture or oxygen barrier properties) and sufficient structural strength. The items may include such products as smokeless tobacco pouches, tea bags, breath mints, medication, throat lozenges, candy, chewing gum, and the like.

[0027] FIGURES 6A and 6B show containers where products such as tobacco pouches 1 or breath mints 2 may be seen through display window 63 (on the bottom of housing 60 as seen in FIGURE 5A). These products will be visible provided the tub floor 75 is transparent. Thus it is possible to determine how much of the contents remain, without opening the container. However, the tub may be made of non-transparent material. In any case the tub could be used in a housing with or without a display window.

[0028] The new container provides a lid 20 that fits snugly on housing 30 or other housings shown herein. In certain embodiments the side walls of the housing may be designed to engage the lid with a flexing action so that the side walls must be squeezed in order to release the lid. A plastic housing may more readily provide such flexing action than a metal housing. Furthermore, the snug flex fit may be designed to create a "propping" noise when the lid is removed.

[0029] The lid and housing as described herein are particularly suitable for forming a package sized as is common for a tobacco, medication, or candy container, that is, a substantially rectangular package sized to be held conveniently in the hand. Other sizes and shapes of container may be produced according to same principles. For example, an elongated container might be made which may be more useful for holding pencils, candy sticks, drinking straws, or cigars. An oval-shaped container might be made which may be considered more fashionable and used for holding cosmetics, for example.

[0030] While the invention has been described with respect to preferred embodiments, those skilled in the art will readily appreciate that various changes and/or modifications can be made to the invention without departing from the scope of the invention defined in the appended claims.

Claims

1. A package comprising:

- i) a metal lid (20), comprising a lid face portion bounded by a lid peripheral wall; and
- ii) a housing (40), comprising a base portion bounded by a housing peripheral wall, wherein the lid peripheral wall closely fits around the housing peripheral wall with a friction or interference fit;

and the housing comprising a top flange that provides a sealing surface to which a sealing membrane

may be affixed, the housing peripheral wall having an upper wall and a lower wall (41), wherein the upper wall (44) is disposed inwardly of the lower wall and a transition between the upper wall and lower wall is defined by an at least partially circumferential ledge (42), **characterised in that** the housing is a plastic housing, **in that** the upper wall (44) of the plastic housing (40) comprises at least one detent (46) for cooperation with the metal Lid (20) and for securing the metal lid to the plastic housing, and **in that** the upper wall of the housing, at least in the region of the at least one detent (46) is configured to flex inwardly to aid removal of the metal lid (20).

2. The package as claimed in Claim 1, wherein said housing peripheral wall flexes inward with respect to the lid peripheral wall when the package is closed.

3. The package as claimed in Claim 2, wherein, in a closed configuration, the upper wall of the housing, when flexed inward, is moved away from said Lid peripheral wall and allows the metal lid to be removed.

4. The package as claimed in any preceding claim, further comprising a leaf formed in said housing peripheral wall and the at least one detent (46) is formed on said leaf for engaging said lid peripheral wall, said leaf being connected to said housing peripheral wall for inward movement when pressed, such inward movement releasing said at least one detent from engagement with said lid peripheral wall to facilitate removal of said lid.

5. The package as claimed in any of the preceding claims, further comprising a sealing membrane (80), wherein the sealing membrane (80) is sealed to the top flange.

6. The package as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the housing further comprises an insertable liner (70).

7. The package as claimed in Claim 6, wherein said insertable liner comprises a tub (70) and a liner seal (80).

8. The package as claimed in Claim 6 or 7, wherein said insertable liner comprises one or more external engagement features (79), shaped to engage a complementary internal engagement feature inside said housing.

9. The package as claimed in any claim 6 to 8, wherein the plastic housing (40) further comprises a display aperture (63) formed in the housing base portion (65) and wherein the liner is formed from a transparent material.

10. The package as claimed in Claim 9, wherein the package further comprises one or more items disposed in the insertable liner which is disposed in the plastic housing and said one or more items within said insertable liner are visible through said display aperture (63).
11. The package as claimed in any of claims 6 to 10 wherein the top flange is provided by the insertable liner (70).
12. The package as claimed in claim 8 wherein the plastic housing (40) comprises an inner overhanging ledge (69) and wherein the engagement feature (79) is shaped and configured such that an upper surface of the engagement feature (79) is disposed beneath an underside of the overhanging ledge (69) when the insertable liner is disposed within the plastic housing to thereby retain the insertable liner within the plastic housing.
13. A kit of parts for forming a package according to any of the preceding claims 6 to 12, the kit comprising: a metal lid, a plastic housing and an insertable liner.

Patentansprüche

1. Verpackung, die umfasst:

- i) einen Metalldeckel (20), der einen Deckelflächenabschnitt umfasst, der durch eine Deckelumfangswand begrenzt wird; und
- ii) ein Gehäuse (40), das einen Basisabschnitt umfasst, der durch eine Gehäuseumfangswand begrenzt wird, wobei die Deckelumfangswand genau um die Gehäuseumfangswand mit einer kraftschlüssigen Passung oder einer Übermaßpassung passt;

und das Gehäuse einen oberen Flansch umfasst, der eine Dichtfläche bereitstellt, an die eine Dichtungsmembran befestigt werden kann, und die Gehäuseumfangswand eine obere Wand (44) und eine untere Wand (41) aufweist, wobei die obere Wand (44) im Inneren der unteren Wand angeordnet ist und ein Übergang zwischen der oberen Wand und der unteren Wand durch einen wenigstens teilweise umlaufenden Vorsprung (42) definiert ist, **dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass** das Gehäuse ein Kunststoffgehäuse ist und die obere Wand (44) des Kunststoffgehäuses (40) wenigstens eine Arretierung (46) umfasst, und zwar zum Zusammenwirken mit dem Metalldeckel (20) und zur Sicherung des Metalldeckels an dem Kunststoffgehäuse, und dadurch, dass die obere Wand des Gehäuses wenigstens in dem Bereich der wenigstens einen Arretierung (46) konfiguriert ist, um sich nach innen zu biegen, um das Ent-

fernen des Metalldeckels (20) zu unterstützen.

- 2. Verpackung gemäß Anspruch 1, wobei die Gehäuseumfangswand sich in Bezug auf die Deckelumfangswand nach innen biegt, wenn die Verpackung geschlossen ist.
- 3. Verpackung gemäß Anspruch 2, wobei, in einer geschlossenen Konfiguration, die obere Wand des Gehäuses, wenn sie nach innen gebogen ist, von der Deckelumfangswand weg bewegt wird und es dem Metalldeckel erlaubt, entfernt zu werden.
- 4. Verpackung gemäß einem der vorherigen Ansprüche, die weiterhin eine Klappe umfasst, die in der Gehäuseumfangswand ausgebildet ist, und die wenigstens eine Arretierung (46) auf der Klappe ausgebildet ist, um die Deckelumfangswand in Eingriff zu nehmen, wobei die Klappe an der Gehäuseumfangswand befestigt ist, um sich nach innen zu bewegen, wenn sie gedrückt wird, wobei eine solche Bewegung nach innen wenigstens eine Arretierung aus dem Eingriff mit der Deckelumfangswand freigibt, um das Entfernen des Deckels zu erleichtern.
- 5. Verpackung gemäß einem der vorherigen Ansprüche, die weiterhin eine Dichtungsmembran (80) umfasst, wobei die Dichtungsmembran (80) an dem oberen Flansch befestigt ist.
- 6. Verpackung gemäß einem der vorherigen Ansprüche, wobei das Gehäuse weiterhin eine einsetzbare Auskleidung (70) umfasst.
- 7. Verpackung gemäß Anspruch 6, wobei die einsetzbare Auskleidung eine Wanne (70) und eine Auskleidungsdichtung (80) umfasst.
- 8. Verpackung gemäß Anspruch 6 oder 7, wobei die einsetzbare Auskleidung ein oder mehrere externe Eingriffselemente (79) umfasst, die geformt sind, um ein komplementäres inneres Eingriffselement innerhalb des Gehäuses in Eingriff zu nehmen.
- 9. Verpackung gemäß einem der Ansprüche 6 bis 8, wobei das Kunststoffgehäuse (40) weiterhin eine Ansichtsöffnung (63) umfasst, die in dem Gehäusebasisabschnitt (65) ausgebildet ist, und wobei die Auskleidung durch ein transparentes Material ausgebildet ist.
- 10. Verpackung gemäß Anspruch 9, wobei die Verpackung weiterhin ein oder mehrere Gegenstände umfasst, die in der einsetzbaren Auskleidung angeordnet sind, die in dem Kunststoffgehäuse angeordnet ist, und die ein oder mehreren Gegenstände in der einsetzbaren Auskleidung durch die Ansichtsöffnung (63) sichtbar sind.

11. Verpackung gemäß einem der Ansprüche 6 bis 10, wobei der obere Flansch durch die einsetzbare Auskleidung (70) bereitgestellt ist.
12. Verpackung gemäß Anspruch 8, wobei das Kunststoffgehäuse (40) einen inneren überhängenden Vorsprung (69) aufweist, und wobei das Eingriffselement (79) so geformt und konfiguriert ist, derart, dass eine obere Fläche des Eingriffselements (79) in der Nähe einer Unterseite des überhängenden Vorsprungs (69) angeordnet ist, wenn die einsetzbare Auskleidung in dem Kunststoffgehäuse angeordnet ist, um dadurch die einsetzbare Auskleidung in dem Kunststoffgehäuse zu halten.
13. Teilekit zum Ausbilden einer Verpackung gemäß einem der vorherigen Ansprüche 6 bis 12, wobei das Kit umfasst: einen Metalldeckel, ein Kunststoffgehäuse und eine einsetzbare Auskleidung.

Revendications

1. Emballage comprenant :

- i) un couvercle métallique (20), comprenant une partie de face de couvercle bordée par une paroi périphérique de couvercle ; et
 - ii) un boîtier (40), comprenant une partie de base bordée par une paroi périphérique de boîtier, dans lequel la paroi périphérique de couvercle s'ajuste étroitement autour de la paroi périphérique de boîtier par un ajustement par frottement ou interférence ;
- et le boîtier comprenant un rebord supérieur qui fournit une surface d'étanchéité sur laquelle une membrane d'étanchéité peut être fixée, la paroi périphérique de boîtier ayant une paroi supérieure et une paroi inférieure (41), dans lequel la paroi supérieure (44) est disposée vers l'intérieur de la paroi inférieure et une transition entre la paroi supérieure et la paroi inférieure est définie par un épaulement au moins partiellement circonférentiel (42), **caractérisé en ce que** le boîtier et un boîtier en plastique et la paroi supérieure (44) du boîtier (40) en plastique comprend au moins un cran (46) pour coopération avec le couvercle métallique (20) et pour fixer le couvercle métallique sur le boîtier en plastique, et **en ce que** la paroi supérieure du boîtier, au moins dans la région de l'au moins un cran (46) est configurée pour fléchir vers l'intérieur pour aider à l'enlèvement du couvercle métallique (20).

2. Emballage selon la revendication 1, dans lequel ladite paroi périphérique de boîtier fléchit vers l'intérieur par rapport à la paroi périphérique de couvercle

quand l'emballage est fermé.

3. Emballage selon la revendications 2, dans lequel, dans une configuration fermée, la paroi supérieure du boîtier, quand elle est fléchie vers l'intérieur, est éloignée de ladite paroi périphérique de couvercle et permet au couvercle métallique d'être enlevé.
4. Emballage selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes, comprenant en outre une lamelle formée dans ladite paroi périphérique de boîtier et l'au moins un cran (46) est formé sur ladite lamelle pour venir en prise avec ladite paroi périphérique de couvercle, ladite lamelle étant connectée à ladite paroi périphérique de boîtier pour un déplacement vers l'intérieur quand elle est pressée, un tel déplacement vers l'intérieur libérant ledit au moins un cran de sa prise avec ladite paroi périphérique de couvercle pour faciliter l'enlèvement dudit couvercle.
5. Emballage selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes, comprenant en outre une membrane d'étanchéité (80), dans lequel la membrane d'étanchéité (80) est scellée sur le rebord supérieur.
6. Emballage selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes, dans lequel le boîtier comprend en outre une doublure insérable (70).
7. Emballage selon la revendication 6, dans lequel ladite doublure insérable comprend cuvelage (70) et un joint de doublure (80).
8. Emballage selon la revendication 6 ou 7, dans lequel ladite doublure insérable comprend un ou plus éléments de prise extérieurs (79), formés pour venir en prise avec un élément de prise intérieur complémentaire à l'intérieur dudit boîtier.
9. Emballage selon l'une quelconque des revendications 6 à 8, dans lequel le boîtier en plastique (40) comprend en outre une ouverture d'affichage (63) formée dans la partie de base de boîtier (65) et dans lequel la doublure est formée à partir d'un matériau transparent.
10. Emballage selon la revendication 9, dans lequel l'emballage comprend en outre un ou plusieurs objets disposés dans la doublure insérable qui est disposée dans le boîtier en plastique et lesdits un ou plusieurs objets dans ladite doublure insérable sont visibles à travers ladite ouverture d'affichage (63).
11. Emballage selon l'une quelconque des revendications 6 à 10, dans lequel le rebord supérieur est fourni par la doublure insérable (70).
12. Emballage selon la revendication 8, dans lequel le

boîtier en plastique (40) comprend un épaulement en porte-à-faux (69) intérieur et dans lequel l'élément de prise (79) est formé et configuré de telle manière qu'une surface supérieure de l'élément de prise (79) est disposée au-dessous d'un dessous de l'épaulement en porte-à-faux (69) quand la doublure insérable est disposée dans le boîtier en plastique pour ainsi retenir la doublure insérable dans le boîtier en plastique.

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13. Ensemble prêt-à-monter formé de parties pour former un emballage selon l'une quelconque des revendications 6 à 12, l'ensemble prêt-à-monter comprenant : un couvercle métallique, un boîtier en plastique et une doublure insérable.

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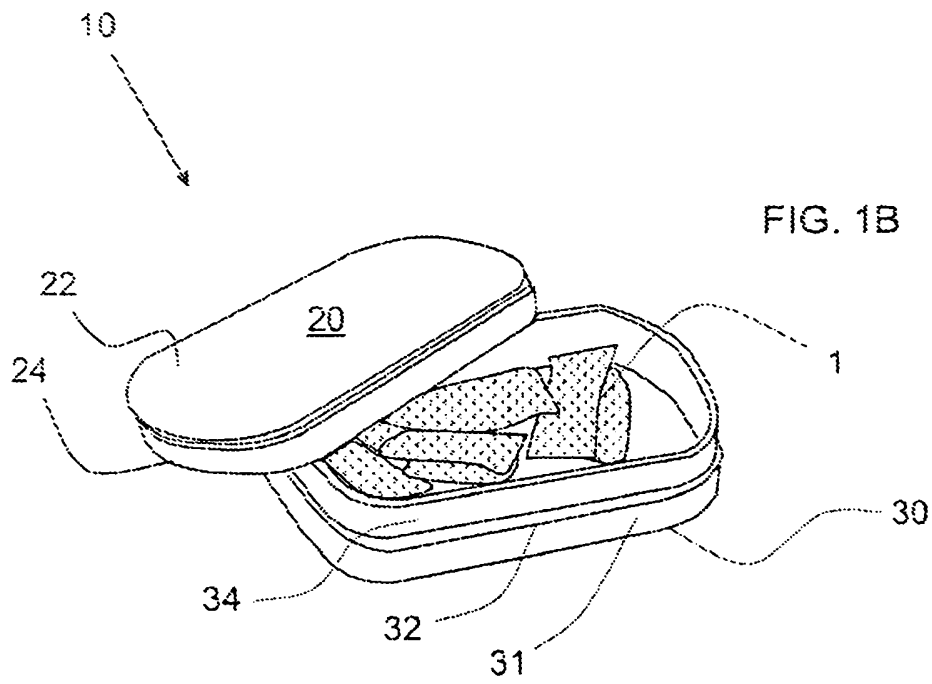
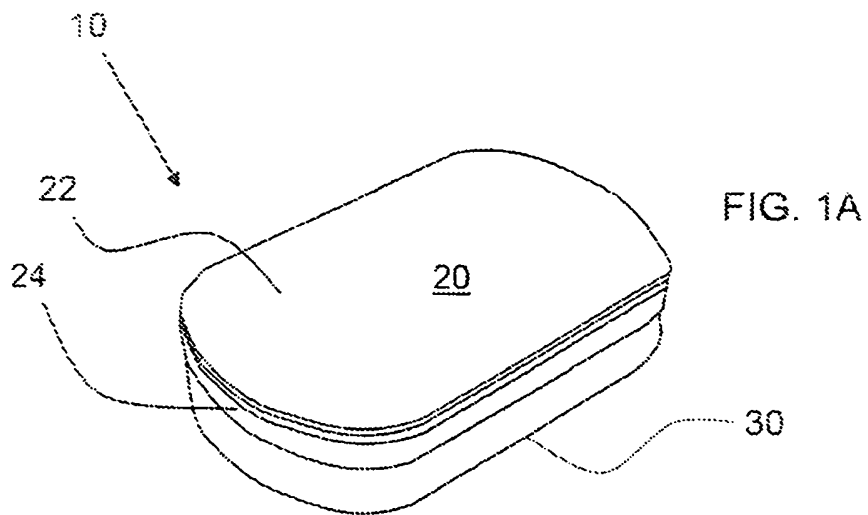


FIG. 2

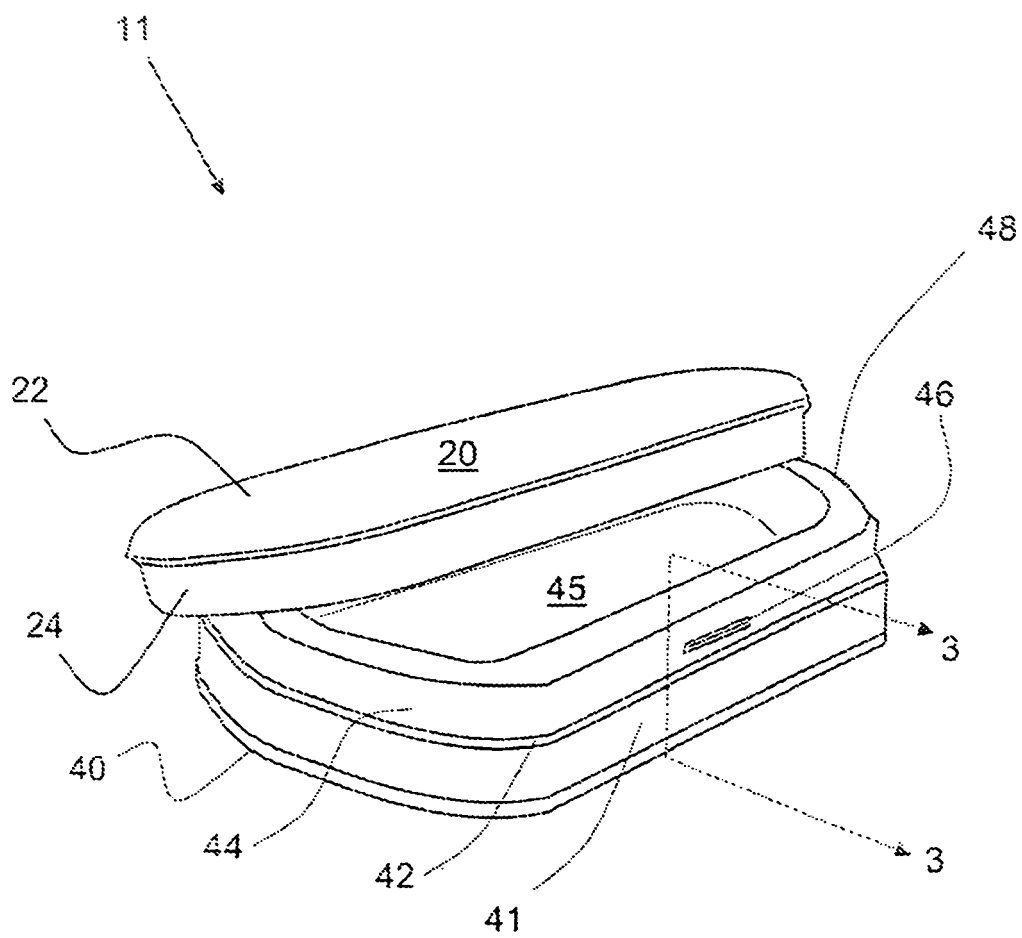


FIG. 3

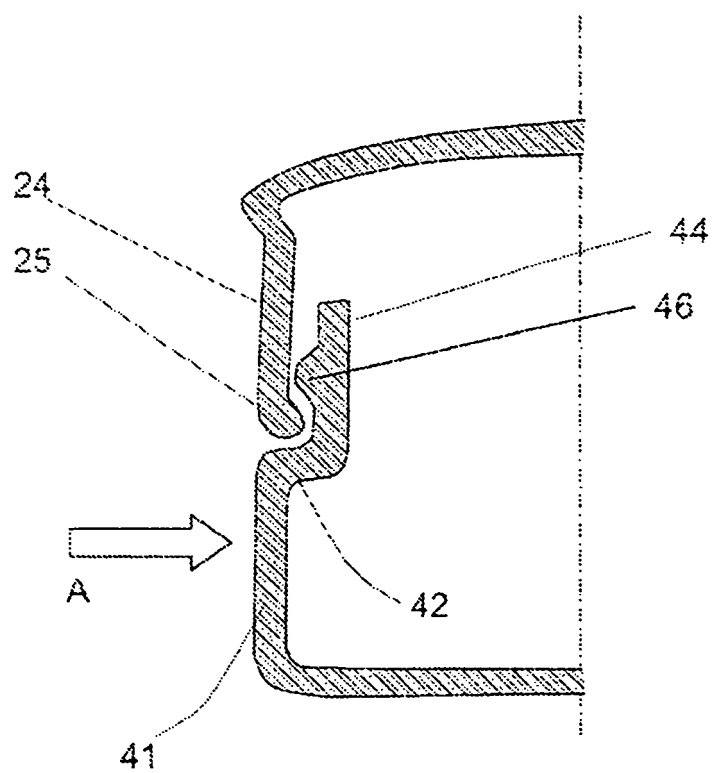


FIG. 4

