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(54) **ABSORBENT ARTICLE WITH IMPROVED LIQUID-HANDLING ABILITY**

(57) **ABSTRACT**

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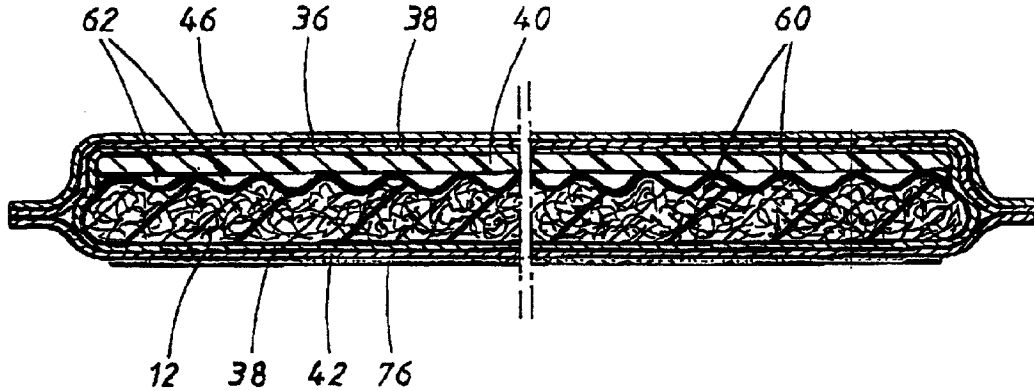
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An absorbent article (10) such as a sanitary napkin includes an elongate absorbent core (12) delimited by an upper surface (14) and a lower surface (16). A pair of opposed longitudinal edge portions (18, 20) terminates in longitudinal edges (22, 24) and a pair of opposed transverse edges (26, 28). The core has a first end portion (30), a second end portion (32) and a central portion (34) located between the end portions. A liquid permeable topsheet (36) extends over the upper surface (14), and a liquid barrier backsheet (42) covers the lower surface (16) of the absorbent core (12). Leakage barriers (68, 70), each barrier covering a longitudinal edge portion (18, 20) in a respective longitudinal edge portion (18, 20), forms liquid-retaining pockets along each longitudinal edge portion. First spacers are arranged between the absorbent core (12) and each of the leakage barriers (68, 70), and the first spacers are arranged at a distance from each other along the length of the leakage barriers (68, 70) and defines fluid conducting first channels (62), that extends generally perpendicularly to the longitudinal edge portions (18, 20), between the leakage barriers (68, 70) and the absorbent core (12).



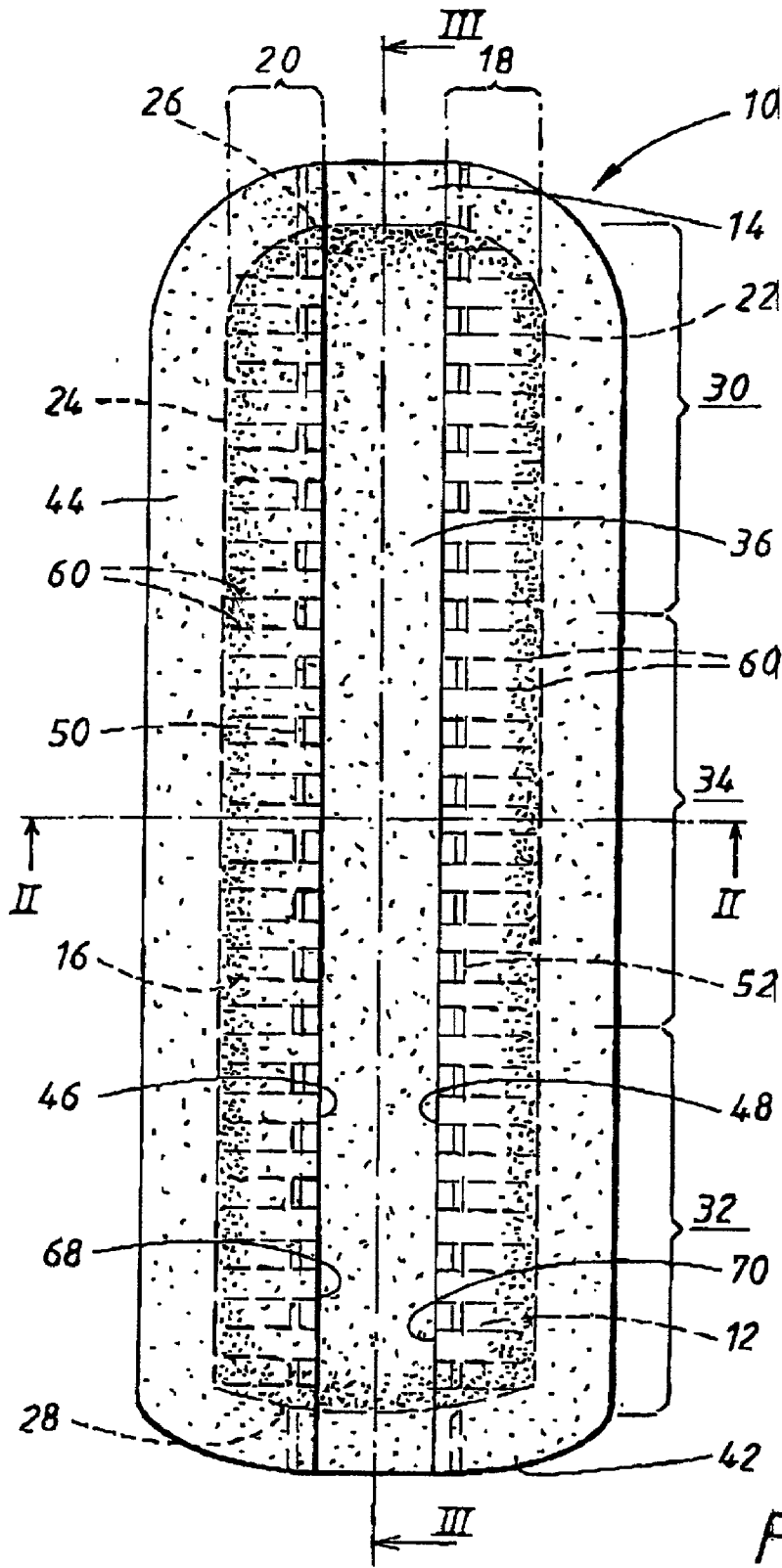


FIG. 1

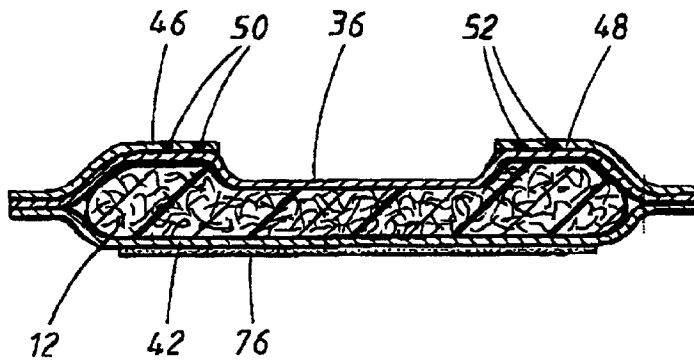


FIG. 2

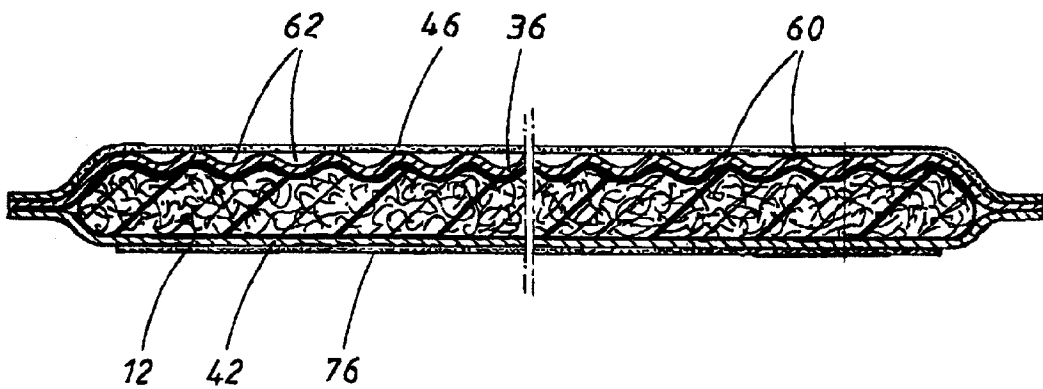


FIG. 3

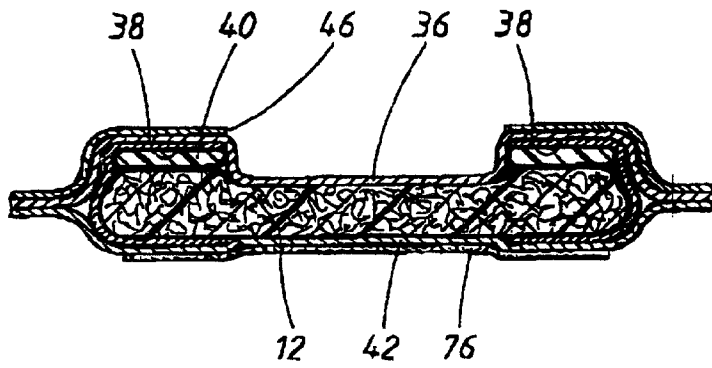


FIG. 5

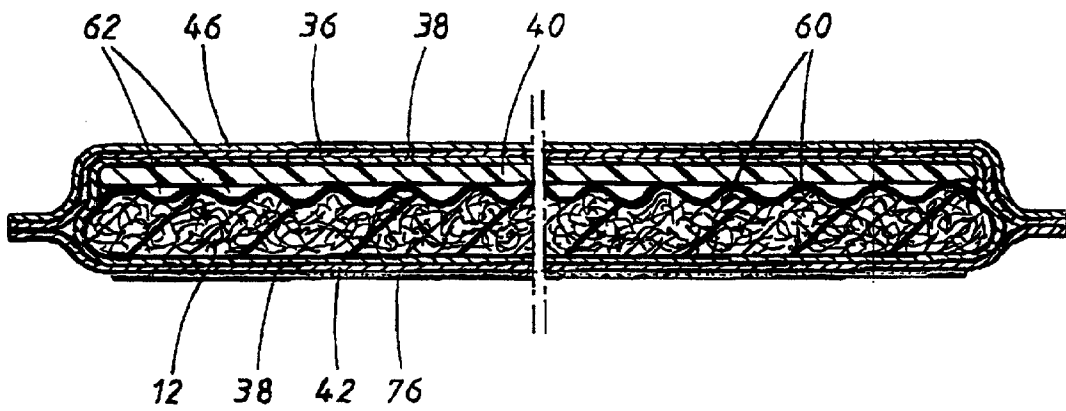


FIG. 6

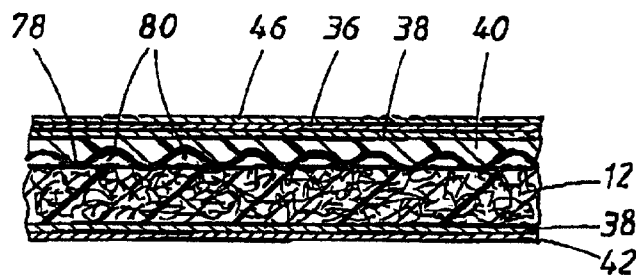


FIG. 7

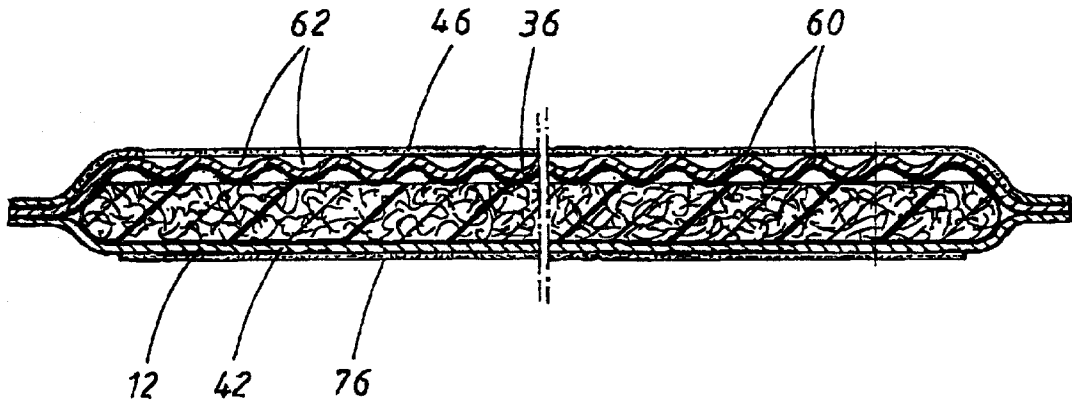


FIG. 8

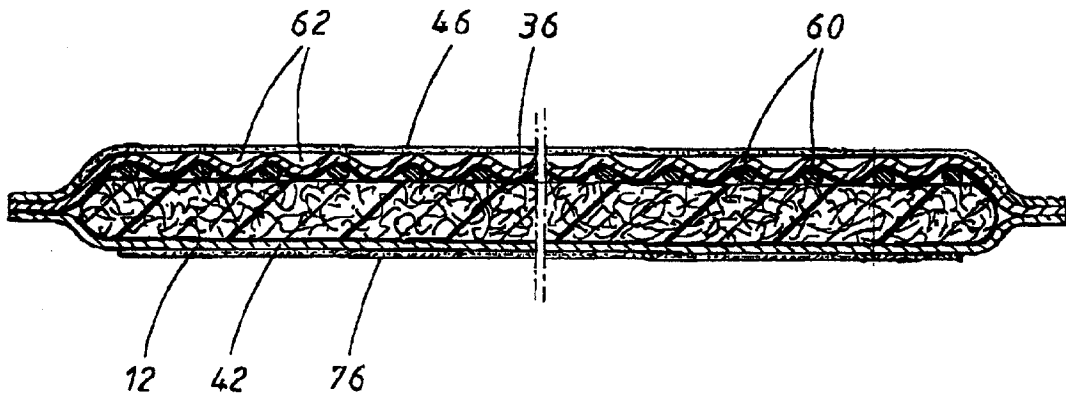


FIG. 9

ABSORBENT ARTICLE WITH IMPROVED LIQUID-HANDLING ABILITY

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] The present application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Application Ser. No. 60/236,744, filed on Oct. 2, 2000, the entire contents of which is hereby incorporated herein by reference.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] 1. Technical Field

[0003] The present invention relates to an absorbent article such as a sanitary napkin. The article comprises an elongate absorbent core delimited by an upper surface and a lower surface, a pair of opposed longitudinal edge portions terminating in longitudinal edges, and a pair of opposed transverse edges. The core has a first end portion, a second end portion and a central portion located between said end portions. A liquid permeable topsheet extends over said upper surface, and a liquid barrier backsheet covers said lower surface of said absorbent core. The absorbent article comprises leakage barriers, each barrier covering a longitudinal edge portion in a respective longitudinal edge portion and forms liquid-retaining pockets along each longitudinal edge portion.

[0004] 2. Discussion of Related Art

[0005] A common problem associated with an absorbent article such as a diaper or an incontinence pad, which is intended to absorb body fluid, is that fluid may leak out past the side edges of the article. Such leakage is particularly common when gushes of urine are delivered in a short time period and with a high fluid pressure. During urination, the absorbent core cannot instantly absorb all the fluid, which leads to an excessive amount of fluid that flows over the surface of the absorbent article towards the edges not only in the central portion. To help prevent side leakage, it is customary to arrange different types of leakage barriers along the side edges of the article. For example, diapers and incontinence pads are often provided with elastic members which, while the article is being used, are tightened around the user's body and hold the side edges of the article in sealing contact against the body. Elastic members can also be used to form raised edge barriers. It is also possible to create raised barriers in other ways, for example by providing ridges or the like, which prevent liquid from flowing freely over the side edges of the article. Side leakage barriers may also be in the form of a pair of liquid barrier sheets and a pair of strips of resilient material, that form pockets and increase the stiffness of the sanitary napkin in the region of the mid portion of the absorbent article.

[0006] However, it has been found that despite all the efforts, which have hitherto been made to avoid leakage at the side edges, the problem still remains, especially in certain applications. This problem is, for instance, troublesome for bedridden individuals since the risk of leakage increases considerably when the user is lying in a side position. Body fluid which is excreted in this position runs out and gathers, by the effect of gravity, at the longitudinal side edge of the article, where the available absorption material quickly becomes over-saturated with liquid. The

remaining liquid that is not absorbed can run freely along the side edge. The risk is of course great that this liquid will be forced out over the side edge of the article and escape if the user moves in such a way that a gap is formed between the article and the user's body.

[0007] Conventional hygienic absorbent articles such as sanitary napkins, incontinence pads and the like are provided with an absorbent core which, in theory, is capable of absorbing all the fluid normally discharged by the wearer over an intended exposure time of the article. However, leakage can arise if the absorbent article is not maintained in proper relation with the wearer. One attempt to overcome this problem is to provide a sanitary napkin with so called wings. However, winged sanitary napkins also suffer from certain drawbacks. For example, if a particularly heavy discharge occurs, fluid may spread over the topsheet of the napkin and escape over the wings to thereby stain adjacent clothing. In addition, many wearers regard winged sanitary napkins as being too indiscreet.

[0008] Due to their relative narrowness, when sanitary napkins do leak this generally occurs at the side edges. Many attempts have been made to overcome the problem of edge leakage, for example by using strips of resilient material in at least the central portion of the absorbent article which increases the shape stability of the article in the strike zone, i.e., that region of the absorbent article which is first contacted by discharged bodily fluid. In this manner, the risk of bunching of the absorbent article is significantly reduced. In addition, the resilient strips press the longitudinal edges of the absorbent article towards the wearer, thereby causing the article to more readily mould to the body of the wearer. Since the strips need not extend along the entire length of the article, the article may be worn discretely. Advantageously, the remote ends of the strips may serve to impart a bowl-shape to the article to further conform the article to the shape of the wearer.

[0009] Standing gathers is a collective name for these different types of elasticated leakage barriers along the side edges of the article, and they suffer from certain drawbacks. For example, if the standing gathers are subject to an excessive amount of external pressure due to, for example, tight trousers, a soft mattress, when the user is in a vertical position or sitting on a bicycle saddle, the standing gathers will be compressed and thereby somewhat closed, whereby the fluid is prohibited from flowing into the pockets formed by the standing gathers.

OBJECTS AND SUMMARY

[0010] While absorbent articles having elasticated side barriers may exhibit improved side edge leakage protection when compared to an absorbent article without elasticated side barriers, a need still exists for an absorbent article which further reduces the risk of side edge leakage while still being sufficiently discrete to satisfy the majority of wearers. It is therefore an object of the present invention to provide an absorbent article that meets these requirements.

[0011] The present invention relates to an absorbent article such as a sanitary napkin, where the absorbent article comprises an elongate absorbent core delimited by an upper surface and a lower surface, a pair of opposed longitudinal edge portions terminating in longitudinal edges, and a pair of opposed transverse edges. Said core has a first end

portion, a second end portion and a central portion located between said end portions. A liquid permeable topsheet extends over said upper surface, and a liquid barrier backsheet covers said lower surface of said absorbent core. Said absorbent article comprises leakage barriers, each barrier covering a longitudinal edge portion in a respective longitudinal edge portion and forms liquid-retaining pockets along each longitudinal edge portion.

[0012] The above-stated objects are achieved in accordance with the present invention by an absorbent article in which a part of the absorbent article is profiled and includes spacers arranged at a distance from each other along the length of the upper surface to create fluid conducting first channels.

[0013] The profiled parts of the absorbent article may be the longitudinal edge portions, or the entire upper surface. The profiled parts are profiled by groove compression of either the topsheet or the upper part of the absorbent core, or the both together, and the spacers comprise the uncompressed parts of the topsheet and/or the upper part of the absorbent core.

[0014] Preferred embodiments will become evident by the subsequent dependent claims.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0015] The invention will be described in the following by way of example only and with reference to the attached drawings.

[0016] FIG. 1 is a schematic plan view of an absorbent article according to the present invention.

[0017] FIG. 2 is a sectional view on a larger scale along line II-II of FIG. 1.

[0018] FIG. 3 is a view of a sectional view on a larger scale along line III-III of FIG. 1.

[0019] FIG. 4 is a schematic plan view of an absorbent article according to a second embodiment of the present invention with a partially cut away topsheet.

[0020] FIG. 5 is a sectional view on a larger scale along line V-V of FIG. 4.

[0021] FIG. 6 is a view of a sectional view on a larger scale along line VI-VI of FIG. 4.

[0022] FIG. 7 is a sectional view taken longitudinally on another embodiment of the present invention.

[0023] FIG. 8 is a sectional view taken longitudinally on another embodiment of the present invention.

[0024] FIG. 9 is a sectional view taken longitudinally on another embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0025] In the figures, the reference numbers that recur in the different figures refer to the same feature, and additional features in different embodiments are designated new reference numbers.

[0026] The invention will be presented in a number of different embodiments and will also refer to previously known sanitary napkins, which constitute examples of dif-

ferent known techniques and shall not be seen as limiting for the present invention. The previously known sanitary napkins constitute examples, on which all the embodiments of the invention may be applicable.

[0027] As is apparent from FIG. 1 and 3, reference numeral 10 generally denotes an absorbent article according to the invention. The absorbent article 10 may be a sanitary napkin having an elongate absorbent core 12 delimited by an upper surface 14 and a lower surface 16, and the core 12 may be any conventional absorbent core. The absorbent core further includes opposed longitudinal edge portions 18, 20 terminating in longitudinal edges 22, 24, and a pair of opposed transverse edges 26, 28. The core is made up of a first end portion 30, a second end portion 32 and central portion 34 located between the end portions. In use, the sanitary napkin is intended to be placed relative the wearer so that the strike zone lies within the central portion 34.

[0028] As is typical in the art, the absorbent article 10 is further provided with a liquid permeable topsheet 36 extending over the upper surface 14 of the absorbent core 12. The topsheet 36 may be any conventional topsheet. For example, it may be made from a multi-apertured plastic film, or a non-woven material. The absorbent article may also comprise a liquid barrier backsheet 42 extending over the lower surface 16 of the absorbent core 12. The backsheet may be joined to the topsheet 36 to form a peripheral margin 44 around preferably the entire absorbent core 12. On the backsheet 42, there may be fastening means 76 attached for an increased possibility to fasten the absorbent article to the clothing closest to the wearer's body. The fastening means may be an adhesive, mechanical fastening means such as Velcro or another fastening means suitable for the purpose.

[0029] The sanitary napkin 10 further comprises a pair of two longitudinal leakage barriers 68, 70, each leakage barrier covering a longitudinal edge portion 18, 20 of the permeable topsheet 36. The leakage barriers 68, 70 each form a liquid-retaining pocket along each longitudinal edge portion 18, 20.

[0030] FIGS. 1, 2 and 3 show the invention according to a first embodiment of the invention where a part of the absorbent article 10, such as at least the longitudinal edge portion 18, 20, are made profiled and include first spacing means 60 arranged at a distance from each other along the length of the longitudinal edge portion 18, 20 and will create fluid conducting first channels 62 between the leakage barriers 68, 70 and the top sheet 36 in a direction from the center of the sanitary napkin 10 to the longitudinal sides of the sanitary napkin 10. The first channels 62 are especially advantageous when the leakage barriers 68, 70 are pressed against the top sheet 36 and the upper surface 14 of the absorbent core 12, by an external force, e.g. tight trousers or if the user is sitting down. The first channels 62 then allow migrating body fluids to flow under the leakage barriers 68, 70 even when the leakage barriers 68, 70 are pressed against the top sheet 36, thereby increasing the flow through the absorbent core 12 rather than through the leakage barriers 68, 70 or over the leakage barriers 68, 70. Since the leakage barriers 68, 70 serve to cover the longitudinal edge portions 18, 20, and to seal the sanitary napkin 10 against the user's body, any transport of fluid towards the side of the sanitary napkin is guided via the first channels 62 into the pockets which are formed beneath the leakage barriers 68, 70 and

down through the absorbent core **12**, even when the leakage barriers **68, 70** are pressed against the top sheet **36**, thereby diminishing the risk of side leakage.

[0031] The absorbent article according to a second embodiment of the invention is characterized in that each longitudinal edge portion **18, 20** is profiled by a groove compression of the topsheet **36**. The topsheet **36** is formed into a wave pattern of peaks and valleys, with a distance of about 1-15 mm between the peaks, which also defines the width of the first channels, and that the first spacing means **60** consists of the peaks. See, e.g., FIG. 8.

[0032] The absorbent article according to a third embodiment of the invention is characterized in that the longitudinal edge portion **18, 20** also may be made profiled by a groove compression of the upper part of the absorbent core **12**, and the first spacing means **60** consists of the uncompressed parts. See, e.g., FIG. 6.

[0033] A fourth embodiment of the invention is similar to the second embodiment, except that the entire upper surface **14**, i.e., including the areas between the longitudinal edge portions **18, 20**, is profiled by a groove compression of the topsheet **36**.

[0034] A fifth embodiment of the invention is similar to the third embodiment, except that the entire upper surface **14**, i.e., including the areas between the longitudinal edge portions **18, 20**, is made profiled by a groove compression of an upper part of the absorbent core **12**, and that the first spacing means **60** consists of the uncompressed parts.

[0035] According to a sixth embodiment of the invention, the profiled parts are made profiled by groove compression of both the topsheet **36** and the upper part of the absorbent core **12**, and that the first spacing means **60** consists of the uncompressed parts of the topsheet **36** and the upper part of the absorbent core **12**. See, e.g., FIG. 3.

[0036] According to a seventh embodiment of the invention, a distance material in the form of cylinders is placed in at least a first area, in a direction from the center of the sanitary napkin **10** to the longitudinal sides of the sanitary napkin **10**, and the first spacing means **60** consists of the distance material. See, e.g., FIG. 9.

[0037] FIGS. 1, 2 and 3 may be further used as support in the description of yet further embodiments of the invention, where the longitudinal leakage barriers **68, 70** are in the form of barrier strips **46, 48**, with each strip covering a longitudinal edge portion **18, 20** of the permeable topsheet **36**, that form pockets between the top sheet **36** and the barrier strips **46, 48** along the side edges. The barrier strips **46, 48** may be of either a liquid barrier material or a material that at least resists fluid penetration, e.g., a non-woven hydrophobic fibrous web or another material suitable for the purpose. It is an advantage if the barrier material is breathable, i.e., will permit the passage of air and water vapour. Since the barrier strips **46, 48** may be joined with the peripheral margin **44**, the pockets along the edge portions **18, 20** may be seen as enclosed by the barrier strips **46, 48** and the topsheet **36**. A pair of pretensioned, longitudinal elastic members **50, 52** are arranged along the barrier strips **46, 48** of the sanitary napkin **10**. The elastic members **50, 52** are designed to curve the sanitary napkin **10** to the shape of the user's body and at the same time they constitute means for raising the barrier strips **46, 48** from the upper surface **14**

of the sanitary napkin **10**. Thus, the elastic members **50, 52** serve to hold the barrier strips **46, 48** of the sanitary napkin **10** in contact against the user's body, in order to ensure that, during use, no gap arises between the sanitary napkin **10** and the user's body, through which gap body fluid could leak from the sanitary napkin **10**. Since the material of the barrier strips **46, 48** is primarily hydrophobic, migrating body fluids tend to flow through the absorbent core rather than through the resilient barrier strips **46, 48**. Since the barrier strips **46, 48** serve to conceal the longitudinal edge portions **18, 20**, any collection of fluid at the edge portions is concealed, thereby imparting an impression of increased safety and cleanliness to the wearer.

[0038] Advantageously, the elastic members **50, 52** are made of a three dimensional elastic material such as an elastic polymer, elastic non-woven fibrous plastic, elastic foam, silicone, rubber or another material suitable for the purpose.

[0039] The elastic members **50, 52** may be in the form of a string of beads (not shown). The beads serve as second spacing means between the barrier strips **46, 48** and the top sheet **36**, and will create fluid conducting second channels (not shown) between the barrier strips **46, 48** and the top sheet **36** in a direction from the center of the sanitary napkin **10** to the longitudinal sides of the sanitary napkin **10**. The second channels **62** are especially advantageous when the barrier strips **46, 48** are pressed against the top sheet **36** and the upper surface **14** of the absorbent core **12**, by an external force, e.g., tight trousers or if the user is sitting down. The second channels then allow migrating body fluids to flow under the barrier strips **46, 48** even when the barrier strips **46, 48** are pressed against the top sheet **36**, thereby increasing the flow through the absorbent core **12** rather than through the barrier strips **46, 48** or over the barrier strips **46, 48**. Since the barrier strips **46, 48** serve to cover the longitudinal edge portions **18, 20**, and to seal the sanitary napkin **10** against the user's body, any transport of fluid towards the sides of the sanitary napkin is guided via the second channels into the pockets which are formed beneath the barrier strips **46, 48** and down through the absorbent core **12**, even when the barrier strips **46, 48** are pressed against the top sheet **36**, thereby diminishing the risk of side leakage.

[0040] The second spacing means together with the first spacing means will advantageously create channels defined by the combined space of the second channels and the first channels, which means that all of the above mentioned advantages with distance material creating channels will be enhanced.

[0041] The beads may alternatively have other cross-sectional shapes, such as an oval shape. The beads may also have different diameters and/or different cross sections in the same string of beads.

[0042] The string of beads may be created by, for example, point sealing of a three dimensional elastic thread such as an elastic polymer, elastic non-woven fibrous plastic, elastic foam, silicone, rubber or another material suitable for the purpose or two elastic webs with non-elastic spacers between.

[0043] The elastic members **50, 52** may be broad so that they are in the form of a string of short cylinders (not

shown). The short cylinders serve as second spacing means between the barrier strips **46, 48** and the top sheet **36**, and will create second channels between the barrier strips **46, 48** and the top sheet **36** in a direction from the center of the sanitary napkin **10** to the longitudinal sides of the sanitary napkin **10**, and serve the same purpose as in the first embodiment. Here, short cylinder means a cylinder having a length less than the cylinder diameter. The cylinder may alternatively have other cross-sectional shapes, such as an oval shape. The cylinders may also have different diameters and/or different cross sections in the same string of cylinders.

[0044] The string of short cylinders may be created by, for example, point sealing of a three dimensional elastic thread such as an elastic polymer, elastic non-woven fibrous plastic, elastic foam, silicone, rubber or another material suitable for the purpose or two elastic webs with non-elastic spacers between.

[0045] The elastic members **50, 52** may be even broader than those forming the short cylinders and are in the form of a string of long cylinders (not shown). The long cylinders serve as second spacing means between the barrier strips **46, 48** and the top sheet **36**, and will create second channels between the barrier strips **46, 48** and the top sheet **36** in a direction from the center of the sanitary napkin **10** to the longitudinal sides of the sanitary napkin **10**, and serve the same purpose as in the second embodiment. Here, long cylinder means a cylinder length longer than the cylinder diameter. The cylinder may alternatively have other cross-sectional shapes, such as an oval shape. The cylinders may also have different diameters and/or different cross sections in the same string of cylinders.

[0046] The string of long cylinders may be created by, for example, point sealing of a three dimensional elastic thread such as an elastic polymer, elastic non-woven fibrous plastic, elastic foam, silicone, rubber or another material suitable for the purpose or two elastic webs with non-elastic spacers between.

[0047] The string of long cylinders may be substituted by a distance material (not shown) in the form of long cylinders and elastic members, e.g., the elastic members **50, 52** previously mentioned. The cylindrical distance material is placed within the barrier strips **46, 48** or in a manner suitable for the purpose of using the distance material to create second channels between the barrier strips **46, 48** and the top sheet **36** in a direction from the center of the sanitary napkin **10** to the longitudinal sides of the sanitary napkin **10**. The elastic members **50, 52** may be a pair of pretensioned, longitudinal elastic members **50, 52** that are arranged along the barrier strips **46, 48** of the sanitary napkin **10**. The elastic members **50, 52** are designed to curve the sanitary napkin **10** to the shape of the user's body and at the same time they constitute means for keeping open the side pockets created beneath the barrier strips **46, 48** and the sanitary napkin **10**.

[0048] The distance material in the form of long cylinders according to the fourth embodiment of the invention may alternatively have other cross-sectional shapes, such as an oval shape. The distance material may also have different diameters and/or different cross sections in the barrier strips **46, 48**.

[0049] The long cylinders may be a three dimensional elastic thread such as an elastic polymer, elastic non-woven

fibrous plastic, elastic foam, silicone, rubber or another material suitable for the purpose or two elastic webs with non-elastic spacers between.

[0050] The short and the long cylinders may be up to 50 mm long.

[0051] The distance between the second spacing means, i.e., the width of the second channel, is 1-20 mm.

[0052] FIGS. **4, 5** and **6** show the invention combined with a previously known sanitary napkin and as is typical in the art. The absorbent article **10** comprises leakage barriers **68** in the form of a pair of liquid barrier sheets **38** and a pair of strips of resilient material **40**, with each liquid barrier sheet **38** covering a longitudinal edge portion **18, 20** of the permeable topsheet **36**. The strips of resilient material **40** may be placed either over or under the top sheet **36**, but in the figures the strips of resilient material **40** are placed under the top sheet **36**, which also will be described in the following embodiments. The liquid barrier sheets **38** may be placed either over or under the top sheet, but in the figures the strips of liquid barrier sheets **38** are placed over the top sheet **36**, which also will be described in the following embodiments. The liquid barrier sheets are preferably coated with adhesive on their concave surface, i.e., the surface facing towards the absorbent body. Although a pair of separate barrier sheets has been shown in the drawings, it is to be realized, however, that the two sheets **38** may be replaced by a single sheet extending over the entire lower surface **16** of the absorbent core, being folded over the longitudinal edges **22, 24** and covering the longitudinal edge portions **18, 20** of the permeable top sheet **36**.

[0053] In this previously known sanitary napkin it is also known, and as best illustrated in FIG. **4, 5** and **6**, that the strip of resilient material **40** is placed between each liquid impermeable sheet **38** and the absorbent core **12** along each longitudinal edge portion **18, 20** of the absorbent core in at least the mid portion **34** of the absorbent core. The strips of resilient material serve to significantly increase the stiffness of the sanitary napkin in the region of the mid portion. In other words, the resistance to flexure in the longitudinal direction is increased by at least 10% in the longitudinal edge portions in the mid portion when compared to a sanitary napkin without strips of resilient material.

[0054] Advantageously, the strips of resilient material **40** are primarily hydrophobic and may be a three dimensional non-woven fibrous plastic wadding or a foamed plastic. Since the material of the strips is primarily hydrophobic, migrating body fluids tend to flow through the absorbent core rather than through the strips of resilient material. Since, in the embodiment shown in FIG. **2**, the strips of resilient material serve to conceal the longitudinal edge portions **18, 20** in the mid portion **34**, any collection of fluid at the edge portions is concealed, thereby imparting an impression of increased safety to the wearer.

[0055] According to another embodiment of the invention, the strips of resilient material **40** may also be profiled by groove compressions on the surface that faces the upper side of the absorbent core **12**. Thus, the strips of resilient material **40** include third spacing means **78** in the form of uncompressed resilient material arranged at a distance from each other along the length of the resilient material **40** to create third fluid conducting third channels **80** between the strips of

resilient material **40** and the absorbent core **12**, and the third spacing means **78** consists of the uncompressed parts of the resilient material **40**. See, e.g., **FIG. 7**.

[**0056**] In a further embodiment of the previously known sanitary napkin, strips of resilient material **40** are placed between the liquid impermeable sheets **38** and the lower surface **16** of the absorbent core **12**. Preferably, however, the strips of resilient material are placed between the liquid impermeable sheets **38** and the upper surface **14** of the absorbent core. In this manner, the strips of resilient material **40** serve to "lift" the liquid impermeable sheets **38** from the upper surface **14** of the absorbent core to thereby create an opening to a liquid-retaining pocket formed by the liquid impermeable sheet along each longitudinal edge portion **18**, **20**. Accordingly, any discharged bodily fluids which migrate across the upper surface of the absorbent core will flow through the opening and into the liquid-retaining pocket. Due to the fact that the concave surfaces of the sheets of resilient material are coated with adhesive and thereby adhere to the absorbent core and strips of resilient material, the risk of fluids leaking from the liquid-retaining pockets is minimal.

[**0057**] Particularly in the case when the absorbent article comprises a pair of liquid impermeable sheets **38** covering the longitudinal edge portions **18**, **20** of the absorbent core **12**, the absorbent article may also include a liquid impermeable backsheet **42** extending over the lower surface **16** of the absorbent core. Preferably, the backsheet **42** is made of the same material as the liquid impermeable sheet **38** and is joined to the topsheet **36** to form a peripheral margin **44** around preferably the entire absorbent core **12**. In this manner, the liquid-retaining pockets along the edge portions **18**, **20** are enclosed by the topsheet **36** and the backsheet **42**.

[**0058**] For ease of manufacturing and to ensure that the risk of edge leakage anywhere along the length of the absorbent article is minimal, the liquid retaining pockets preferably extend along the entire length of the absorbent core **12**. Since, however, the form stability of the absorbent article is most critical only in the mid portion **34** of the absorbent core, the strips of resilient material **40** need only occupy said mid portion. However, if desired, the strips may extend into the first and second end portions **30**, **32**.

[**0059**] The pockets may extend along the entire length of said absorbent core **12**, or extend along the central portion **34** of said absorbent core **12**.

[**0060**] The absorbent article according to any one of the preceding embodiments is characterized in that the thickness of the first, second and third spacing means is preferably at least 1 mm, and that the sum of the thickness of the first and second spacing means or the first and third spacing means or the second and the third spacing means defines the respective combination's maximum height of the sum of the first channel and/or second channel and/or third channel. The thickness of the spacing means also means the diameter when the spacing means are cylindrical or spherical.

[**0061**] The distance between the third spacing means **78**, i.e., the width of the third channels, is 1-15 mm.

[**0062**] Advantageously, the mid portion **34** of the absorbent core **12** comprises between 20% and 60%, preferably between 30 and 45%, and most preferably about one third, of the length of the absorbent core.

[**0063**] Obviously, the hydrophobic strips of resilient material **40** or the barrier strips **46**, **48**, i.e., the leakage barriers **68**, **70** may not extend over the entire width of the absorbent core since this would prevent passage of body fluids into the absorbent core **12**. Accordingly, the leakage barriers **68**, **70** have an extension transversely across the absorbent core, with the extension being between 5% and 25% of the total width of the sanitary napkin at the wetting area. The liquid impermeable sheets **38** advantageously display the same or similar transverse extension as the strips of resilient material. The thickness of the strips of resilient material **40**, i.e., the extension of the strips in a direction substantially perpendicular to the upper surface of the absorbent core, should be sufficient to allow the strips to mould to the wearer's body. Typically, the thickness of the strips in an uncompressed condition can thus lie between about 1 and 5 mm.

[**0064**] The invention is not restricted to the embodiments described above and shown in the drawings, but may be modified within the scope of the appended claims. For example, strips of resilient material may be placed on both surfaces of the absorbent core in the longitudinal edge portions.

[**0065**] The absorbent article may be a sanitary napkin, a diaper, an incontinent protection article, a panty liner or any absorbent article suitable for the purpose. The absorbent article is not restricted to any shape or configuration, but may be of any shape suitable for the purpose, e.g., triangular, hour-glass shaped or rectangular. Also, the elastic members and the distance material may be of a stiff material, and the side barriers with the distance material will still create the channels for transporting the fluids. The sanitary napkin may also be equipped with wings.

[**0066**] In making a sanitary napkin in a shape other than the one shown in the figures, preferably the topsheet **36** will not extend outside the absorbent core, and the backsheet **42** or the liquid impermeable sheet **38** will not together with the topsheet **36** form a peripheral margin **44**, but the backsheet **42** or the liquid impermeable sheet **38** will be folded over the side edges over the topsheet. The barrier strips **46**, **48**, in the embodiments referring to **FIGS. 4**, **5**, **6** or **7** may be excluded, and shall only be seen as a possibility to reinforce and/or modify the sanitary napkin according to certain needs.

[**0067**] The elastic members not only serve as means for creating channels, but may also bend the sanitary napkin into a cup-shape with the wetting area as one of the low points.

[**0068**] There may also be a combination of the above-described embodiments of the invention. For instance, the resilient material **40** may be profiled at the same time as the absorbent core, together creating fluid conducting channels.

[**0069**] Although only preferred embodiments are specifically illustrated and described herein, it will be appreciated that many modifications and variations of the present invention are possible in light of the above teachings and within the purview of the appended claims without departing from the spirit and intended scope of the invention.

What is claimed is:

1. An absorbent article, comprising:

an elongate absorbent core having an upper surface and a lower surface, a pair of opposed longitudinal edge

portions terminating in longitudinal edges, and a pair of opposed transverse edges, the core having a first end portion, a second end portion and a central portion located between the end portions;

- a liquid permeable topsheet extending over the upper surface;
- a liquid barrier backsheet covering the lower surface of the absorbent core,

leakage barriers, a respective one of the leakage barriers covering each of the longitudinal edge portions and forming a liquid-retaining pocket along each longitudinal edge portion; and

first spacers arranged between the absorbent core and each of the leakage barriers, the first spacers being arranged at a distance from each other along a length of the leakage barriers so as to form fluid conducting first channels between the leakage barriers and the absorbent core, the first spacers extending generally perpendicularly to the longitudinal edge portions.

2. The absorbent article according to claim 1, wherein each longitudinal edge portion of the absorbent core is profiled.

3. The absorbent article according to claim 1, wherein the upper surface is profiled.

4. The absorbent article according to claim 1, wherein the topsheet is profiled by groove compressions, and the first spacers comprise uncompressed parts of the topsheet.

5. The absorbent article according to claim 3, wherein the first spacers comprise uncompressed parts of the absorbent core.

6. The absorbent article according to claim 3, wherein both the topsheet and the upper surface of the absorbent core are profiled by groove compression, and the first spacers comprise uncompressed parts of the topsheet and the upper surface of the absorbent core.

7. The absorbent article according to claim 1, wherein the first spacers comprise a distance material in the form of cylinders, that are placed in the topsheet in a direction from a center of the absorbent article to the longitudinal edges of the absorbent article.

8. The absorbent article according to claim 1, wherein the first spacers comprise a distance material in the form of cylinders, that are placed in the upper surface in a direction from a center of the absorbent article to the longitudinal edges of the absorbent article.

9. The absorbent article according to claim 1, wherein the leakage barriers comprise barrier strips, each barrier strip covering a respective longitudinal edge portion and forming liquid-retaining pockets along each longitudinal edge portion, a pair of longitudinal elastic members are arranged along the barrier strips that are placed along each longitudinal edge portion of the absorbent core in at least the central portion of the absorbent core.

10. The absorbent article according to claim 9, wherein the elastic members are in the shape of a string of beads, and the beads form second spacers.

11. The absorbent article according to claim 9, wherein the elastic members are in the shape of a string of cylinders having a length less than a cylinder diameter, and the cylinders form second spacers.

12. The absorbent article according to claim 9, wherein the elastic members are in the shape of a string of cylinders

having a length longer than a cylinder diameter, and that the cylinders form second spacers.

13. The absorbent article according to claim 9, wherein a distance material in the form of cylinders are placed within the barrier strips in a direction from a center of the absorbent article to the longitudinal edges of the absorbent article.

14. The absorbent article according to claim 1, wherein the barrier strips are primarily hydrophobic.

15. The absorbent article according to claim 1, wherein the longitudinal elastic members are a three dimensional non-woven fibrous plastic wadding or a foamed plastic.

16. The absorbent article according to claim 1, further comprising a liquid impermeable sheet covering the longitudinal edge portions of the absorbent core and each of the leakage barriers comprises a strip of resilient material that is placed between the liquid impermeable sheet and the absorbent core along each longitudinal edge portion of the absorbent core in at least the mid portion of the absorbent core to thereby increase the flexure resistance of the article.

17. The absorbent article according to claim 16, wherein the strip of resilient material is a three dimensional non-woven fibrous plastic wadding or a foamed plastic.

18. The absorbent article according to claim 16, wherein the strip of resilient material is placed between the liquid impermeable sheet and the lower surface of the absorbent core.

19. The absorbent article according to claim 16, wherein the liquid impermeable sheets form liquid-retaining pockets along each longitudinal edge portion.

20. The absorbent article according to claim 16, wherein a side of the strip of resilient material that faces the upper side of the absorbent core is profiled by groove compression.

21. The absorbent article according to claim 20, wherein uncompressed profiled parts of the strip of resilient material form third spacers.

22. The absorbent article according to claim 19, wherein the liquid barrier backsheet and the topsheet are joined to form a peripheral margin around the absorbent core to thereby enclose the liquid-retaining pockets along the edge portions.

23. The absorbent article according to claim 1, wherein the pockets extend along an entire length of the absorbent core.

24. The absorbent article according to claim 1, wherein the pockets extend along only the central portion of the absorbent core.

25. The absorbent article according to claim 1, wherein the central portion of the absorbent core comprises between 20% and 60% of the absorbent core.

26. The absorbent article according to claim 1, wherein the leakage barriers each have an extension transversely across the absorbent core, the extension being between 5% and 25% of the total width of the sanitary napkin at the wetting area.

27. The absorbent article according to claim 1, wherein a thickness of the first spacers is at least 1 mm.

28. The absorbent article according to claim 12, wherein a thickness of the second spacers is at least 1 mm.

29. The absorbent article according to claim 1, wherein a thickness of the third spacers is at least 1 mm.

30. The absorbent article according to claim 1, wherein the absorbent article is a sanitary napkin.

31. The absorbent article according to claim 1, wherein the central portion of the absorbent core comprises between 30% and 45% of the absorbent core.

32. The absorbent article according to claim 1, wherein the central portion of the absorbent core comprises about one-third of the absorbent core.

33. An absorbent article, comprising:

an elongate absorbent core having an upper surface and a lower surface, a pair of opposed longitudinal edge portions terminating in longitudinal edges, and a pair of opposed transverse edges, the core having a first end portion, a second end portion and a central portion located between the end portions;

a liquid permeable topsheet extending over the upper surface;

a liquid barrier backsheet covering the lower surface of the absorbent core,

leakage barriers, a respective one of the leakage barriers covering each of the longitudinal edge portions and forming a liquid-retaining pocket along each longitudinal edge portion; and

channels arranged between the absorbent core and each of the leakage barriers, the channels being arranged at a

distance from each other along a length of the leakage barriers so as to conduct fluid between the leakage barriers and the absorbent core, the channels extending generally perpendicularly to the longitudinal edge portions.

34. The absorbent article according to claim 33, further comprising a liquid impermeable sheet covering the longitudinal edge portions of the absorbent core and each of the leakage barriers comprises a strip of resilient material that is placed between the liquid impermeable sheet and the absorbent core along each longitudinal edge portion of the absorbent core in at least the mid portion of the absorbent core to thereby increase the flexure resistance of the article.

35. The absorbent article according to claim 34, wherein the strip of resilient material is a three dimensional non-woven fibrous plastic wadding or a foamed plastic.

36. The absorbent article according to claim 34, wherein the strip of resilient material is placed between the liquid impermeable sheet and the lower surface of the absorbent core.

37. The absorbent article according to claim 34, wherein the liquid impermeable sheets form liquid-retaining pockets along each longitudinal edge portion.

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