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A cleaning swab

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ABSTRACT

A cleaning swab including:

a stem having a first end and a second end;

5 a first cleaning member disposed at the first end of the stem and including a gauze-like material which is pre-moistened with a first substance adapted to emit a fragrance;

10 a second cleaning member disposed at the second end of the stem and including a substantially dry gauze-like material adapted for absorbing at least the first substance; and

a releasably sealable envelope adapted for sealing at least the first cleaning member to alleviate loss of moisture in the first cleaning member when not in use.

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A CLEANING SWAB

Technical field

The present invention relates to cleaning swabs, and in particular, cotton cleaning
5 swabs.

Background of the Invention

Cotton swabs typically consist of a small stem of cardboard or plastic with a wad of
cotton disposed at one or both ends of the stem.

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A common use of the cotton swab is to clean out a person's ears by inserting one
end of the swab into the ear-hole, and gently rubbing the cotton against the inner-
ear surface so as to collect ear-wax, oil, dirt, and other unwanted matter. In other
instances, cotton swabs are commonly used to apply substances to a person's
15 skin either for cosmetic or medical purposes.

It is perceived that problems exist in relation to the use of cotton swabs. Firstly, in
order to more effectively use a cotton swab, it is generally desirable to at least
partially moisten the swab end with water, or any suitable solution to ensure that
20 the unwanted matter may adhere to the cotton swab. Moreover, by moistening the
cotton swab, it also alleviates the abrasiveness of the cotton swab when it rubs
against the skin. Unfortunately it is often inconvenient and/or impractical for a
person to be able to moisten the cotton swab with a suitable substance. For
instance, if the person is a passenger travelling in a car it may not be possible to
25 readily obtain water with which to moisten the cotton swab. Typically, the person
may resort to dipping the cotton swab in his or her saliva which is unhygienic.

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In other respects, the wadded cotton end of the cotton swab is prone to unravelling when it is rubbed up against the person's skin resulting in the undesirable dispersion of cotton fibres. When cleaning a person's ears, the dispersion of these fibres can actually contribute to, rather than help reduce, the build up of unwanted matter in the ear.

Summary of the Invention

The present invention seeks to alleviate at least one of the problems described above in relation to the prior art.

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The present invention involves several different broad forms. Embodiments of the invention may include one or any combination of the different broad forms herein described.

15 In a first broad form, the present invention provides a cleaning swab including:

- a stem having a first end; and
- a cleaning member disposed at the first end of the stem;
- wherein the cleaning member includes a gauze material.

20 In a second broad form, the present invention provides a cleaning swab including

- a stem having a first end;
- a moistened cleaning member disposed at the first end of the stem; and
- an enclosure in which the moistened cleaning member is able to be releasably sealed;

25 wherein, when the enclosure is sealed, moisture is substantially retained in the cleaning member.

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In a third broad form, the present invention provides a cleaning swab including:

a stem having a first end; and

a moistened cleaning member disposed at the first end of the stem, wherein
5 the moistened cleaning member includes a gauze material; and

an enclosure in which the moistened cleaning member is able to be
releasably sealed,

wherein, when the enclosure is sealed, moisture is substantially retained in
the cleaning member.

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Preferably, the cleaning member may include a cotton material. It would be
appreciated by a person skilled in the art that in certain embodiments, alternative
materials may be used which may not be cotton and which may for instance include
synthetic materials.

15

Preferably the gauze includes a cotton material. Typically, the gauze material may
be similar to that used in bandages. Advantageously, the gauze material may
improve ability to collect undesirable matter when the cleaning member is rubbed
against a person's skin, or otherwise, rubbed against any surface when cleaning
20 the surface. The use of a gauze material allows unwanted matter such as dirty
particles to be more readily collected within the apertures of the mesh structure of
the gauze. In contrast, existing wadded-cotton swab ends tend to rely on matter to
simply adhere to the wadded cotton surface. The inter-connected structure of the
gauze also may also alleviate the tendency for fibres to be dispersed from the
25 cleaning member.

In certain embodiments, the cleaning member may include a combination of a rigid
core such as wadded cotton, in combination with an outer layer of gauze material.

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In certain embodiments the present invention may also include a second cleaning member disposed at a second end of the stem. In such an arrangement, the first and second cleaning members are typically of substantially similar shape and dimensions.

Typically, the cleaning member may be pre-moistened with an alcoholic substance. Advantageously, the inclusion of an alcoholic substance may aid in the evaporation of water and other substances on a person's skin – for instance, so that the user is not left with the feeling of "wet ears".

Alternatively, the cleaning member may be pre-moistened with a saline solution. Alternatively, or additionally, the cleaning member may include a moisturising substance such as an oil. For instance, the oil may include sweet almond oil, olive oil or the like. Each particular, oil may have specific beneficial properties. For instance the sweet almond oil is known to be particularly beneficial in relieving skin itch and dryness. Advantageously, the moisturising substance may assist in moisturising a person's skin when the cleaning member is rubbed against the skin so as to allow the act of cleaning the skin to be less abrasive. Where the cleaning swab is used for cleaning particularly sensitive skin, such as that of a baby, it is readily apparent to a person skilled in the art that the ability to simultaneously moisturise the skin whilst cleaning it may be extremely beneficial.

In alternative embodiments of the present invention the cleaning member may also be pre-impregnated with at least one of the following substances:

- (a) Vegetable Glycerine oil which is water soluble and assists in loosening up and dissolving ear wax; and
- (b) Eucalyptus oil which may assist in providing antiseptic and decongestion properties.

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In certain embodiments, the cleaning member may also include a scented and/or aromatic substance. Advantageously, the use of a scented substance may provide a soothing smell to calm or otherwise relax a user of the cotton swab.

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It would be appreciated by a person skilled in the art that numerous other advantages may be readily evident from the present invention. For instance, the availability of pre-moistened cleaning swabs may alleviate the time wasted ordinarily when dipping the cotton swab into the moistening substance before use.

10 For instance, if a person uses many cotton swabs during a session, the person does not need to moisten each cleaning member before use which would otherwise be unduly time-consuming. Additionally, the availability of readily-moistened cleaning members provides added convenience where it would otherwise be difficult for a user to access a saline solution, alcohol, or even water.

15 Rather than having to resort to applying saliva to the cleaning member as is often the case, the cleaning member may already be conveniently pre-moistened and ready to use.

Typically, the enclosure includes a foil material however plastic or other material
20 deemed suitable by a person skilled in the art may also be used. Typically the enclosure may include a pair of front and back rectangular-shaped sheets wherein the edges are heat-sealed together to enclose the entire cleaning swab therein. In certain embodiments, it may be further envisaged that the enclosure only seals in the cleaning member whilst the stem may protrude from the enclosure. Typically
25 the enclosure may be torn open so as to release the cleaning swab for use. Typically the enclosure may include a weakened tear line to assist a user in tearing open the enclosure.

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Alternatively, the enclosure may include a rigid container including a storage compartment for storing a plurality of cleaning swabs in accordance with at least one of the above-described broad forms, and, a dispensing means for controllably dispensing the at least one cleaning swab from the rigid container.

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In a further broad form, the present invention provides a cleaning swab including: a stem having a first end and a second end; a first cleaning member disposed at the first end of the stem and including a gauze-like material which is pre-moistened with a first substance adapted to emit a fragrance; a second cleaning
10 member disposed at the second end of the stem and including a substantially dry gauze-like material adapted for absorbing at least the first substance; and a releasably sealable envelope adapted for sealing at least the first cleaning member to alleviate loss of moisture in the first cleaning member when not in use.

15 **Brief Description the Drawings**

The present invention will become more fully understood from the following detailed description of a preferred but non-limiting embodiment thereof, described in connection with the accompanying drawings, wherein:

20

- Figure 1 depicts a first embodiment of a cleaning swab releasably sealed in an enclosure, wherein the enclosure is depicted transparently to allow viewing of the swab sealed therein.

25 **Modes for Carrying out the Invention**

In a first embodiment of the present invention, a cleaning swab (1) is provided which will be described herein by reference to Fig. 1. The cleaning swab (1) includes a tubular stem (2) made from a rigid plastic material. The stem (2) may
30 typically be around 50 mm in length.

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A pair of cleaning members (3a, 3b) are disposed at opposite ends of the stem (2) and each include an oval or otherwise bulb-like configurations. The cleaning members (3a, 3b) include also include a cotton gauze material similar to that used in medical bandages. The cleaning members (3a, 3b) are mounted to the
5 respective ends of the stem (2) by a suitable adhesive. The cleaning members (3a, 3b) each also include rigid cores around which the gauze material is layered wherein the rigid core provides added support to the cleaning members in use.

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5 The cleaning members (3a, 3b) of the first embodiment are impregnated with a moisturising substance such as sweet almond oil or the like. In alternative embodiments, the cleaning members (3a, 3b) may be pre-impregnated with saline solution, or any other suitable substance which may assist in moisturising a person's skin in use and/or which provides a pleasant fragrance. In yet further embodiments, the cleaning members (3a, 3b) may simply be pre-impregnated with an alcoholic substance or iodine where the cleaning swab is designed to sterilise or clean a wound on a person's skin for instance.

10 The first embodiment further includes a foil wrapper (4) which releasably encloses the cleaning swab (1) therein prior to use. The dimensions of the foil wrapper (4) are substantially rectangular-shaped and selected to snugly accommodate the dimensions of the cleaning swab (1). During manufacture, after the cleaning swab (1) has been placed within the wrapper (4), heat is typically applied to the edges of
15 the wrapper (4) so as to heat seal the cleaning swab (4) therein.

The wrapper (4) includes a tear line (5) to assist a user in tearing a portion of the wrapper (4) so as to effect release of the cleaning swab (1) stored therein.

20 It will be appreciated by persons skilled in the art that numerous variations and/or modification may be made to the invention as shown in the specific embodiments without departing from the spirit or scope of the invention as broadly described. The present embodiments are, therefore, to be considered in all respects as illustrative and not restrictive.

25 The reference in this specification to any prior publication (or information derived from it), or to any matter which is known, is not, and should not be taken as an acknowledgment or admission or any form of suggestion that that prior publication (or information derived from it) or known matter forms part of the common general
30 knowledge in the field of endeavour to which this specification relates.

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The claims defining the invention are as follows:

1. A cleaning swab including:
a stem having a first end and a second end;
5 a first cleaning member disposed at the first end of the stem and including a gauze-like material which is pre-moistened with a first substance adapted to emit a fragrance;
a second cleaning member disposed at the second end of the stem and including a substantially dry gauze-like material adapted for absorbing at least the
10 first substance; and
a releasably sealable envelope adapted for sealing at least the first cleaning member to alleviate loss of moisture in the first cleaning member when not in use.
2. A cleaning swab as claimed in claim 1 wherein the first substance includes
15 an essential oil adapted to emit a natural fragrance.
3. A cleaning swab as claimed in claims 1 or 2 wherein the first substance includes a synthetic substance adapted to emit a synthesised natural fragrance.
- 20 4. A cleaning swab as claimed in claims 2 or 3 wherein the natural fragrance substantially resembles at least one of the following fragrances:
tea tree;
jasmine;
eucalyptus;
25 lavender;
citrus;
peppermint;
rose;
almond;
30 camomile;
linseed oil.

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5. A cleaning swab as claimed in any one of the preceding claims wherein the first cleaning member is also pre-moistened with a second substance including an active ingredient for therapeutic treatment of a medical condition.

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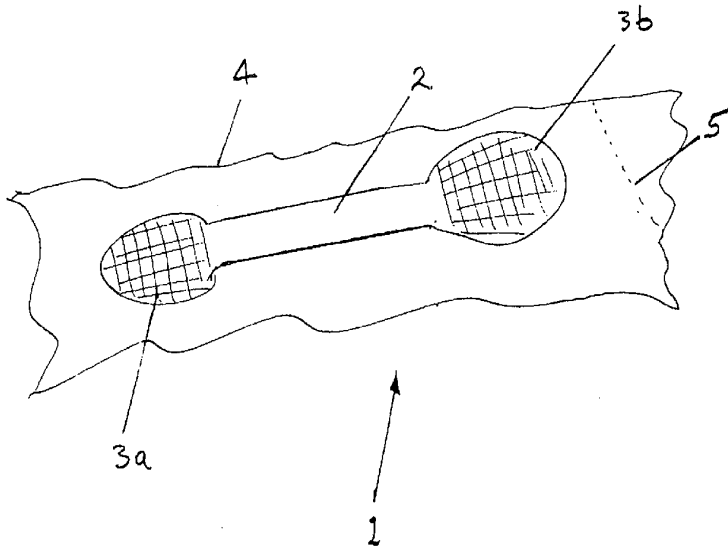


Fig. 1