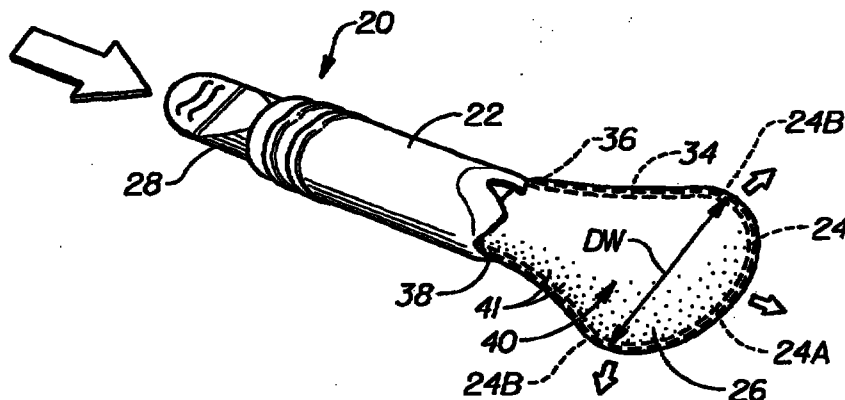




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(54) Title: **SOFT CONFORMABLE HOLLOW BAG TAMPON AND SPREADING TAMPON APPLICATOR**

(57) Abstract

An applicator (20) for a catamenial tampon (26) which is capable of inserting a tampon (26) into the vaginal tract and spreading the tampon open within the vaginal cavity is disclosed. In one embodiment, the applicator (20) comprises tube (22) having an interior (I) and a flexible material which has one end that is formed into a flexible and expandable loop (24). The flexible loop (24) is slidably mounted within the tube (22). The flexible loop (24) is contained inside the tube (22) until it is desired to deploy the tampon. When it is desired to deploy the tampon (26), the flexible loop (24) with the tampon (26) thereon is pushed out the expulsion end of the tube (22). The flexible loop (24) expands laterally and spreads the tampon (26) open within the vaginal cavity. Also disclosed is a catamenial tampon (26) in the form of a soft, conformable, hollow bag. The tampon (26) is capable of being inserted digitally or through the use of the unique applicator described above. Unique combinations of the tampons and applicators described herein are also disclosed, as are methods of the use of such combinations.