CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A disposable absorbent article comprising:

a central body defining a first waist end region including a first longitudinal end edge, a second waist end region spaced longitudinally from the first waist end region and including a second longitudinal end edge, and a crotch region positioned therebetween; and

an absorbent core situated between the end edges, the absorbent core including

a first core element formed by materials imparting absorbent properties; and

a second core element formed by materials imparting absorbent properties, the second core element partially superimposing the first core element to form a multi-layer primary absorbent region of the absorbent core having an absorption capacity per unit area (absorbent density) increased from an absorption density of an adjacent region of the absorbent core; and

wherein the core elements form a central region of the absorbent core having a lateral width less than adjacent regions of the absorbent core, the primary absorbent region forming a substantial portion of the central region; and

wherein the core elements are substantially identical, irregularly shaped core elements.

2. The article of claim 1, wherein the second core element is superimposed partially over the first core element such that the first core element includes a first end section placed adjacent a corresponding first end section of the second core element to form a secondary absorbent region of the absorbent core spaced longitudinally from the primary absorbent region, the secondary absorbent region having a lateral width greater than a lateral width of the primary absorbent region, and wherein the primary absorbent region includes a layer of the first core element and a layer of the second core element, and wherein the secondary absorbent region includes both first end sections and is substantially single layered throughout.

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3. The article of claim 2, wherein the primary absorbent region is positioned centrally in the crotch region and has a lateral width reduced from lateral widths of adjacent regions of the absorbent core, and wherein the first core element includes a second end section placed adjacent a corresponding second end section of the second core element to form a second secondary absorbent region of the absorbent core spaced longitudinally from the first secondary absorbent region, the absorbent core having a central region positioned between the secondary absorbent regions having a lateral width generally reduced from the lateral widths of the secondary absorbent regions.

4. (Cancelled)

5. The article of claim 1, wherein the first and second core elements are partially superimposed to provide an absorbent core having an absorbency profile with variations in absorbent density along the longitudinal direction.

6. The article of claim 5, wherein the first and second core elements are further partially superimposed to provide an absorbent core having an absorbency profile with variations in absorbent density along the lateral direction.

7. The article of claim 1, wherein each of the core elements include elastic materials incorporated therewith, the elastic materials being generally laterally oriented and concentrated to substantially laterally contract the core element therebout and to form a narrowed section of the primary absorbent region, and wherein the elastic materials are elongated elastic strands oriented generally laterally to impart generally lateral elasticity to the core element, and wherein the elastics strands are integrated in a relaxed state, such that a lateral width of the absorbent core proximate the elastic strands is reduced relative to adjacent regions of the core element.

8. The article of claim 7, wherein the elastic materials are concentrated proximate a longitudinal end area of the core element to form an elasticated region thereabout, the elasticated regions being generally placed one atop the other to provide a substantially elasticated primary absorbent region.

9. The article of claim 1, wherein the second core element has a plurality of slits penetrating therethrough and one of the core elements includes a plurality of elastics attached therewith such that the second core element susbtantially contracts and the slits provide voids through said second core element.

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10. The article of claim 1, wherein each of the core elements extends from one waist end region to the other waist end region mutually superimposing the other core element therebetween, each core element having longitudinal end regions situated in the waist end regions to form a laterally extended end region of the core having a lateral width greater than an adjacent region of the core.

11. A disposable absorbent article comprising:

a central body defining a first waist end region including a first end edge, a second waist end region spaced longitudinally from the first waist end region and including a second end edge, and a crotch region positioned therebetween; and

an absorbent core situated between the end edges, the core including a plurality of elastics incorporated with the at least one core element such that the core element is substantially laterally contracted in a narrowed region about the elastics; and

wherein the absorbent core includes at least one end region that is substantially non-elasticized, the at least one end region having a lateral width substantially wider than a lateral width of the narrowed region; and

wherein the narrowed region of the substantially laterally contracted at least one core element substantially corresponds with and defines a lateral width of a substantially laterally contracted narrowed region of the absorbent core.

12. The article of claim 11, wherein the absorbent core further includes a second end region spaced longitudinally from the at least one end region, the narrowed region being positioned longitudinally between the end regions and generally in the crotch region of the central body, and wherein the width of the narrowed region is generally reduced from a lateral width of the second end region.

13. The article of claim 12, wherein the elastics are generally laterally aligned and each elastic extends from a location proximate one side margin of the narrowed region to a location proximate an opposite side margin of the narrowed region.

14. The disposable absorbent article of claim 12, wherein the absorbent core includes a first core element formed by materials imparting absorbent properties and a second core element formed by materials imparting absorbent properties, the second core element partially superimposing the first core element to form a multi-layer primary absorbent region of the

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absorbent core having an absorption capacity per unit area increased from an absorption capacity per unit area of other regions of the absorbent core; and

wherein the multi-layer absorbent region substantially coincides with the narrowed region.

15. The article of claim 14, wherein each of the first and second core elements include a plurality of elastics incorporated therewith to form a narrowed region of the core element, and

wherein the narrowed regions of the core elements are positioned adjacent one another to substantially form the narrowed region of the absorbent core.

16. The article of claim 14, wherein the narrowed regions of the core elements are mutually superimposed to form the narrowed region of the core.

17. The article of claim 11, wherein the elastics are positioned proximate a side margin of the core element and generally aligned therewith to provide a concavity in said side margin proximate the elastics.

18. The article of claim 11, wherein the core includes a first core element at least partially superimposing the second core element to form a multi-layer primary absorbent region having an absorption capacity per unit area increased from an absorption capacity per unit area of other regions of the absorbent core, the narrowed regions of the core elements being situated to provide a substantially laterally contracted primary absorbent region.

19. The article of claim 18, wherein the second core element includes slits that provide voids penetrating through the second core element in the substantially laterally contracted primary absorbent region.

20. The article of claim 11, wherein the absorbent core includes a core element with which the elastics are attached, each of the plurality of elastics being adhered to the core element at a plurality of adhesion locations positioned and spaced apart along the length of the elastic to form a plurality of ridges in the core element and in between adhesion locations.

21. The article of claim 20, wherein the ridges are longitudinally extended and spaced laterally between adhesion locations, such that the absorbent core includes a plurality of longitudinally extending void spaces below said ridges and a plurality of channels between successive ridges.

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22. The article of claim 21, wherein the absorbent core futher includes a second core element placed below the first core element with the plurality of elastics therebetween, and adhesion strips generally mutually adhering the core elements and the elastics, and wherein the elastics are generally longitudinally spaced apart and the adhesion locations are spaced apart elongated adhesion strips that are directed transversely to the elastics, and wherein each of the plurality of void spaces is located between the two core elements and each of the plurality of channels is located between successive ridges and above the first core element.

23. The article of claim 22, wherein the second core element is placed adjacent the first core element with the plurality of elastics therebetween, such that the adhesion strips generally mutual adhere the core elements and the elastics to form a plurality of said longitudinally extending void spaces between the core elements and a pair of said channels located above and below the core elements at each adhesion strip.

24. A disposable absorbent article comprising:

a central body defining a first waist end region including a first longitudinal end edge, a second waist end region spaced longitudinally from the first waist end region and including a second longitudinal end edge, and a crotch region positioned therebetween; and

an absorbent core situated between the end edges, the absorbent core including

a first core element formed by materials imparting absorbent properties, the first core element having an inside generally longitudinally extending side margin and an outside generally longitudinally extending side margin; and

a second core element formed by materials imparting absorbent properties, the first core element having an inside generally longitudinally extending side margin and an outside generally longitudinally extending side margin;

wherein the second core element partially superimposes the first core element to form a multi-layer primary absorbent region of the absorbent core; and

wherein each core elements further includes a pair of generally longitudinally spaced apart and generally laterally directed slits originating from the inside side margin, a pair of end flaps defined by opposite end portions of the core element being pivoted outwardly from the rest of the core element about the slits, and a middle region between the end flaps.

25. The article of claim 24, wherein each end flap of the first core element is placed adjacent an end flap of the second core element to form an absorbent end region of the absorbent

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core, and wherein the middle regions are substantially superimposed to form a narrower central region of the core that includes the primary absorbent region, the pair of absorbent end regions having a lateral width greater than a lateral width of the narrower central region.

26. A disposable absorbent article comprising:

a central body defining a first waist end region including a first end edge, a second waist end region spaced longitudinally from the first waist end region and including a second end edge, and a crotch region positioned therebetween; and

an absorbent core situated between the end edges, the absorbent core including a first core element having a pair of generally longitudinally-directed side margins and a second core element having a pair of generally longitudinally-directed side margins, the core elements being placed adjacent one another and each having a first elastic placed alongside of and proximate one side margin to form a concave portion of said one side margin thereabout and a second elastic placed alongside of and proximate an opposite side margin to form a concave portion thereabout.

27. The article of claim 26, wherein the first and second elastics on the core element are spaced longitudinally and laterally apart such that the core element takes, at least partly, a generally sinusoidal form.

28. The article of claim 27, wherein the first and second core elements are placed adjacent one another such that the first core element is partially superimposed over the second core element to form a multi-layer absorbent region having an absorbent capacity per unit area increased from adjacent regions of the absorbent core.

29. The article of claim 27, wherein the first and second core elements are placed adjacent one another such that one side margin of each core element provides one of two outside side margins of the absorbent core, and wherein concave portions of the outside side margins are generally laterally aligned.

30. The article of 29, wherein the concave portions of said outside side margins are generally aligned to form a central region of said absorbent having a lateral width substantially narrowed relative to end regions of the absorbent core.

31. The article of claim 27, wherein each core element includes a plurality of generally laterally directed slits along a portion of one of the side margins located opposite a concave portion, said portion of the opposite side margin exhibiting a generally convex form relative to said concave portion.

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32. A disposable absorbent article comprising:

a central body defining a first waist end region including a first longitudinal end edge, a second waist end region spaced longitudinally from the first waist end region and including a second longitudinal end edge, and a crotch region positioned between the waist end regions; and

an absorbent core situated between the end edges, the absorbent core including a first end region, a second end region spaced longitudinally from the first end region, and a central region positioned therebetween; and

wherein the first end region, the second end region, and the central region absorbent are portions of a single core element, the first end region being an end portion of the core element twisted counter clockwise relative to the central region and the second end region being an opposite end region twisted counter-clockwise relative to the central region, and wherein the end regions are twisted relative to the central region such that the end regions generally have lateral widths that are greater than a lateral width of the central region.

33. A disposable absorbent article comprising:

a central body defining a first waist end region including a first longitudinal end edge, a second waist end region spaced longitudinally from the first waist end region and including a second longitudinal end edge, and a crotch region positioned between the waist end regions; and

a first absorbent core element situated between the end edges, the absorbent core including a first end region and a second end region spaced longitudinally from the first end region, wherein the first end region is an end portion of the first core element twisted counter-clockwise about a longitudinal centerline of the first core element to form at least one multi-layered absorbent region of the first core element and the second end region being an opposite end region twisted clockwise about the longitudinal centerline to form at least one other multi-layered absorbent region of the first core element.

34. The article of claim 33, further comprising a second absorbent core element situated between the end edges, the absorbent core including a first end region and a second end region spaced longitudinally from the first end region, wherein the first end region is an end portion of the second core element twisted counter-clockwise about a longitudinal centerline of the second core element to form at least one multi-layered absorbent region of the second core element and the second end region being an opposite end region twisted clockwise about the

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longitudinal centerline to form at least one other multi-layered absorbent region of the second core element; and

wherein the first core element is superimposed, at least partly, over the second core element to form an absorbent core construction featuring at least one region having a layer of both the first core element and the second core element and at least one region having multiple layers of either the first core element or the second core element.

35. The article of claim 34, wherein the first and second core elements are mutually superimposed to form a plurality of regions having multiple layers of the first core element and multiple layers of the second core element.

36. The article of claim 34, wherein the first core element is substantially identical to the second core element and is generally oriented one-hundred eighty degrees apart from the second core element such that the absorbent core construction is generally symmetrical about a longitudinal centerline and a lateral centerline.

37. A disposable absorbent article comprising:

a central body defining a first waist end region including a first longitudinal end edge, a second waist end region spaced longitudinally from the first waist end region and including a second longitudinal end edge, and a crotch region positioned between the waist end regions; and

an absorbent core element situated between the end edges, the absorbent core element including a first end region, a second end region spaced longitudinally from the first end region, and a narrowed central region positioned therebetween, the narrowed central region including side flaps folded inwardly to reduce the width of the central region.

38. The article of claim 37, wherein the absorbent core element include a pair of laterally spaced apart side margins and a pair of said side flaps along each side margin, each side flap being folded along fold lines that originate at the side margin and directed inwardly toward a lateral centerline of said absorbent core element.

39. The article of claim 38, wherein the absorbent core element further includes a generally laterally directed slit along each side margin, the slits defining a laterally directed edge of said flaps and a lateral extent width of the central region.

40. The article of claim 39, further including a second core element placed adjacent the absorbent core element to form a multi-layered central region having increased absorption capacity per unit area, and wherein the second core element is secured beneath the flaps.

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CLAIMS

What is claimed is :

1. A disposable absorbent article comprising:

a central body defining a first waist end region including a first end edge, a second waist end region spaced longitudinally from the first waist end region and including a second end edge, and a crotch region positioned therebetween; and

an absorbent core situated between the end edges, the absorbent core including at least one absorbent core element and a plurality of elastics that are generally laterally aligned and mutually longitudinally spaced apart, and are incorporated with the at least one core element such that the core element is substantially laterally contracted in a narrowed region of the core element about the elastics; and

wherein the absorbent core includes at least one end region that is substantially non-elasticized, the at least one end region having a lateral width substantially wider than a lateral width of the narrowed region of the core element; and

wherein the narrowed region of the substantially laterally contracted core element substantially corresponds with and defines a lateral width of a substantially laterally contracted narrowed region of the absorbent core and wherein each of a plurality of said elastics extends laterally from a location proximate one side margin of the narrowed region of the core element to a location proximate an opposite side margin of the narrowed region of the core element; and

wherein the elastics are concentrated in a central region of the core element between the end regions, the elastics extending laterally from one side margin of the core element to another side margin of the core element, and wherein the elastics are arranged in longitudinally spaced apart rows of varying pitch, wherein elastics near a lateral centerline of the arrangement of elastics are spaced longitudinally closer together than elastics farther away from the lateral centerline to form a concavity in the side margins.

2. The article of claim 1, wherein the absorbent core further includes a second end region spaced longitudinally from the at least one end region, the narrowed region of the absorbent core being positioned longitudinally between the end regions and generally in the

crotch region of the central body, and wherein the width of the narrowed region of the absorbent core is generally reduced from a lateral width of the second end region.

3. The disposable absorbent article of claim 2, wherein the absorbent core includes said at least one absorbent core element and a second absorbent core element, said first and second core elements being formed from materials imparting absorbent properties, the second core element partially superimposing the first core element to form a multi-layer primary absorbent region of the absorbent core having an absorption capacity per unit area increased from an absorption capacity per unit area of other regions of the absorbent core; and

wherein the multi-layer absorbent region substantially coincides with the narrowed region of the absorbent core.

4. The article of claim 3, wherein each of the first and second core elements includes a plurality of said elastics incorporated therewith to form the narrowed region of the core element, and wherein the narrowed regions of the core elements are positioned adjacent one another to substantially form the narrowed region of the absorbent core.

5. The article of claim 4, wherein the absorbent core consists of the first core element and the second core element, including the elastics incorporated in each said core element.

6. The article of claim 1, wherein a plurality of said elastics are adhered to the core element at a plurality of adhesion locations positioned and spaced apart along the length of the elastic to form a plurality of laterally spaced apart ridges in the core element in between adhesion locations.

7. The article of claim 6, wherein the adhesion locations associated with each elastic are longitudinally aligned with adhesion locations on other elastics to form a plurality of longitudinally aligned and laterally spaced apart sets of adhesion locations that form ridges that are longitudinally extended and spaced laterally between sets of adhesion locations.

8. The article of claim 7, wherein the adhesion locations are spaced apart to form a plurality longitudinally extending void spaces below said ridges and a plurality of channels between laterally spaced apart ridges, wherein the absorbent core further includes a second core element placed below the at least one core element with the plurality of elastics therebetween, the adhesion locations generally mutually adhering the core elements and the elastics, and wherein the elastics are generally longitudinally spaced apart and wherein each of the plurality of void spaces is located between the two core elements.

9. The article of claim 8, wherein the second core element is placed adjacent the first core element with the plurality of elastics therebetween, such that the adhesion locations generally mutually adhere the core elements and the elastics to form a plurality of said longitudinally extending void spaces between the core elements and a pair of said channels located above and below the core elements.

10. The article of claim 7, wherein the ridges are spaced apart to form a plurality of longitudinally extending void spaces below said ridges and a plurality of channels between laterally spaced apart ridges.

11. The article of claim 7, wherein the absorbent core further includes a second absorbent core element placed below the at least one absorbent core element and the plurality of elastics.

12. The article of claim 11, wherein the second core element includes a plurality of elastics adhered thereto at a plurality of adhesion locations, and wherein the adhesion locations associated with each elastic are longitudinally aligned with adhesion locations on other elastics in the plurality of elastics to form a plurality of longitudinally aligned and laterally spaced apart sets of adhesion locations that form ridges that are longitudinally extended and spaced laterally between sets of adhesion locations.

13. The article of claim 12, wherein the absorbent core further includes a material layer positioned below the first core element and the elastics incorporated therewith and a second

material layer positioned below the second core element and the elastics incorporated therewith.

14. A disposable absorbent article comprising:

a central body defining a first waist end region including a first end edge, a second waist end region spaced longitudinally from the first waist end region and including a second end edge, and a crotch region positioned therebetween; and

an absorbent core situated between the end edges, the absorbent core including at least one absorbent core element and a plurality of elastics that are generally laterally aligned and mutually longitudinally spaced apart and are incorporated with the at least one absorbent core element such that the at least one core element is substantially laterally contracted in a narrowed region of the at least one core element about the elastics; and

wherein the absorbent core includes at least one end region that is substantially non-elasticized, the at least one end region having a lateral width substantially wider than a lateral width of the narrowed region of the at least one core element; and

wherein the narrowed region of the substantially laterally contracted at least one core element substantially corresponds with and defines a lateral width of a substantially laterally contracted narrowed region of the absorbent core and wherein each of a plurality of said elastics extends laterally from a location proximate one side margin of the narrowed region of the at least one core element to a location proximate an opposite side margin of the narrowed region of the at least one core element; and

wherein the absorbent core further includes a second end region spaced longitudinally from the at least one end region, the narrowed region of the absorbent core being positioned longitudinally between the end regions and generally in the crotch region of the central body, and wherein the width of the narrowed region of the absorbent core is generally reduced from a lateral width of the second end region; and

wherein the absorbent core includes said at least one absorbent core element and a second absorbent core element, said first and second core elements being formed from materials imparting absorbent properties, the second core element partially superimposing the first core element to form a multi-layer primary absorbent region of the absorbent core having an absorption capacity per unit area increased from an absorption capacity per unit area of other regions of the absorbent core; and

wherein the multi-layer absorbent region substantially coincides with the narrowed region of the absorbent core; and wherein each of the first and second core elements includes a plurality of said elastics incorporated therewith to form the narrowed region of the core element; and wherein the narrowed regions of the core elements are positioned adjacent one another to substantially form the narrowed region of the absorbent core.

15. The article of claim 14, wherein, for each core element, the elastics are concentrated in the narrowed region of the core element, wherein the elastics laterally extend between side margins of the core element and are arranged in longitudinally spaced apart rows to laterally elasticize the narrowed region, and wherein the narrowed regions of the first and second core elements are superimposed to form a concavity in the absorbent core corresponding to the narrowed region of the absorbent core.

16. The article of claim 14, wherein the narrowed regions of the core elements are situated to provide a substantially laterally contracted primary absorbent region.

17. The article of claim 16, wherein the second core element includes slits that provide voids penetrating through the second core element in the substantially laterally contracted primary absorbent region.

18. A disposable absorbent article comprising:

a central body defining a first waist end region including a first end edge, a second waist end region spaced longitudinally from the first waist end region and including a second end edge, and a crotch region positioned therebetween; and

an absorbent core situated between the end edges, the absorbent core including at least one absorbent core element and a plurality of elastics that are generally laterally aligned and mutually longitudinally spaced apart are incorporated with the one core element such that the core element is substantially laterally contracted in a narrowed region of the core element about the elastics wherein the absorbent core includes at least one end region that is substantially non-elasticized, the at least one end region having a lateral width substantially wider than a lateral width of the narrowed region of the core element; and

wherein the narrowed region of the substantially laterally contracted core element substantially corresponds with and defines a lateral width of a substantially laterally contracted narrowed region of the absorbent core and wherein each of a plurality of said elastics extends laterally from a location proximate one side margin of the narrowed region of the core element to a location proximate an opposite side margin of the narrowed region of the core element;

wherein a plurality of said elastics are adhered to the core element at a plurality of adhesion locations positioned and spaced apart along the length of the elastic to form a plurality of laterally spaced apart ridges in the core element in between adhesion locations; and

wherein the adhesion locations associated with each elastic are longitudinally aligned with adhesion locations on other elastics to form a plurality of longitudinally aligned and laterally spaced apart sets of adhesion locations that form ridges that are longitudinally extended and spaced laterally between sets of adhesion locations; and

wherein the absorbent core further includes a second absorbent core element placed below the at least one absorbent core element and the plurality of elastics incorporated therewith, the second absorbent core element including a plurality of said elastics incorporated therewith to form a narrowed region of the second absorbent core element, wherein the narrowed regions of the core elements are positioned adjacent one another to substantially form the narrowed region of the absorbent core.

19. The disposable absorbent article of claim 18, wherein the absorbent core further includes a material layer positioned below the first core element and the elastics incorporated therewith and a second material layer positioned below the second core element and the elastics incorporated therewith.

20. A disposable absorbent article comprising:

a central body defining a first waist end region including a first longitudinal end edge, a second waist end region spaced longitudinally from the first waist end region and including a second longitudinal end edge, and a crotch region positioned therebetween; and

an absorbent core situated between the end edges, the absorbent core including a first core element formed from materials imparting absorbent properties, the first core element having

an inside generally longitudinally extending side margin and an outside generally longitudinally extending side margin; and

a second core element formed from materials imparting absorbent properties, the first core element having an inside generally longitudinally extending side margin and an outside generally longitudinally extending side margin;

wherein the second core element partially superimposes the first core element to form a multi-layer primary absorbent region of the absorbent core; and

wherein each core elements further includes a pair of generally longitudinally spaced apart and generally laterally directed slits originating from the inside side margin, a pair of end flaps defined by opposite end portions of the core element being pivoted outwardly from the rest of the core element about the slits, and a middle region between the end flaps.

21. The article of claim 20, wherein each end flap of the first core element is placed adjacent an end flap of the second core element to form an absorbent end region of the absorbent core, and wherein the middle regions are substantially superimposed to form a narrower central region of the core that includes the primary absorbent region, the pair of absorbent end regions having a lateral width greater than a lateral width of the narrower central region.