



Designation: F 2602 – 08

# Standard Test Method for Determining the Molar Mass of Chitosan and Chitosan Salts by Size Exclusion Chromatography with Multi-angle Light Scattering Detection (SEC-MALS)<sup>1</sup>

This standard is issued under the fixed designation F 2602; the number immediately following the designation indicates the year of original adoption or, in the case of revision, the year of last revision. A number in parentheses indicates the year of last reapproval. A superscript epsilon (ε) indicates an editorial change since the last revision or reapproval.

## 1. Scope

1.1 This test method covers the determination of the molar mass of chitosan and chitosan salts intended for use in biomedical and pharmaceutical applications as well as in tissue engineered medical products (TEMPs) by size exclusion chromatography with multi-angle laser light scattering detection (SEC-MALS). A guide for the characterization of chitosan salts has been published as Guide F 2103.

1.2 Chitosan and chitosan salts used in TEMPs should be well characterized, including the molar mass and polydispersity (molar mass distribution) in order to ensure uniformity and correct functionality in the final product. This test method will assist end users in choosing the correct chitosan for their particular application. Chitosan may have utility as a scaffold or matrix material for TEMPs, in cell and tissue encapsulation applications, and in drug delivery formulations.

1.3 *This standard does not purport to address all of the safety concerns, if any, associated with its use. It is the responsibility of the user of this standard to establish appropriate safety and health practices and determine the applicability of regulatory limitations prior to use.*

## 2. Referenced Documents

### 2.1 ASTM Standards:<sup>2</sup>

F 2103 Guide for Characterization and Testing of Chitosan Salts as Starting Materials Intended for Use in Biomedical and Tissue-Engineered Medical Product Applications

2.2 *United States Pharmacopeia/National Formulary*:<sup>3</sup>  
<621> Chromatography

### 2.3 *National Institute of Standards and Technology*:<sup>4</sup>

NIST SP811 Special Publication: Guide for the Use of the International System of Units (SI)

## 3. Terminology

### 3.1 Definitions:

3.1.1 *chitosan, n*—a linear polysaccharide consisting of β(1→4) linked 2-acetamido-2-deoxy-D-glucopyranose (GlcNAc) and 2-amino-2-deoxy-D-glucopyranose (GlcN). Chitosan is a polysaccharide derived by *N*-deacetylation of chitin.

3.1.2 *degree of deacetylation, n*—the fraction or percentage of glucosamine units (GlcN: deacetylated monomers) in a chitosan polymer molecule.

3.1.3 *molar mass average, n*—the given molar mass (*M*) of a chitosan will always represent an average of all of the molecules in the population. The most common ways to express the molar mass are as the *number average* ( $\bar{M}_n$ ) and the *mass average* ( $\bar{M}_w$ ). The two averages are defined by the following equations:

$$\bar{M}_n = \frac{\sum_i N_i M_i}{\sum_i N_i} \quad \text{and} \quad \bar{M}_w = \frac{\sum_i w_i M_i}{\sum_i w_i} = \frac{\sum_i N_i M_i^2}{\sum_i N_i M_i} \quad (1)$$

where:

$N_i$  = number of molecules having a specific molar mass  $M_i$ ,  
and

$w_i$  = mass of molecules having a specific molar mass  $M_i$ .

3.1.3.1 *Discussion*—In a polydisperse molecular population the relation  $\bar{M}_w > \bar{M}_n$  is always valid. The coefficient  $\bar{M}_w/\bar{M}_n$  is referred to as the polydispersity index, and will typically be in the range 1.5 to 3.0 for commercial chitosans.

NOTE 1—The term molecular weight (abbreviated MW) is obsolete and should be replaced by the SI (Système Internationale) equivalent of either relative molecular mass ( $M_r$ ), which reflects the dimensionless ratio of the mass of a single molecule to an atomic mass unit (see ISO 31-8), or molar mass ( $M$ ), which refers to the mass of a mole of a substance and is

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<sup>2</sup> For referenced ASTM standards, visit the ASTM website, www.astm.org, or contact ASTM Customer Service at service@astm.org. For *Annual Book of ASTM Standards* volume information, refer to the standard's Document Summary page on the ASTM website.

<sup>3</sup> Available from United States Pharmacopeia and National Formulary, U.S. Pharmaceutical Convention, Inc. (USPC), Rockville, MD.

<sup>4</sup> Available from National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), 100 Bureau Dr., Stop 1070, Gaithersburg, MD 20899-1070, <http://physics.nist.gov/cuu/Units/bibliography.html>.

typically expressed as grams/mole. For polymers and other macromolecules, use of the symbols  $M_w$ ,  $M_n$ , and  $M_z$  continue, referring to mass-average molar mass, number-average molar mass, and z-average molar mass, respectively. For more information regarding proper utilization of SI units, see [NIST SP811](#).

#### 4. Significance and Use

4.1 The degree of deacetylation of chitosan, as well as the molar mass and molar mass distribution, determines the functionality of chitosan in an application. For instance, functional and biological effects are highly dependent upon the composition and molar mass of the polymer.

4.2 This test method describes procedures for measurement of molar mass of chitosan chlorides and glutamates, and chitosan base, although it in principle applies to any chitosan salt. The measured molar mass is that for chitosan acetate, since the mobile phase contains acetate as counter ion. This value can further be converted into the corresponding molar mass for the chitosan as a base, or the parent salt form (chloride or glutamate).

4.3 Light scattering is one of very few methods available for the determination of absolute molar mass and structure, and it is applicable over the broadest range of molar masses of any method. Combining light scattering detection with size exclusion chromatography (SEC), which sorts molecules according to size, gives the ability to analyze polydisperse samples, as well as obtaining information on branching and molecular conformation. This means that both the number-average and mass-average values for molar mass and size may be obtained for most samples. Furthermore, one has the ability to calculate the distributions of the molar masses and sizes.

4.4 Multi-angle laser light scattering (MALS) is a technique where measurements of scattered light are made simultaneously over a range of different angles. MALS detection can be used to obtain information on molecular size, since this parameter is determined by the angular variation of the scattered light. Molar mass may in principle be determined by detecting scattered light at a single low angle (LALLS). However, advantages with MALS as compared to LALLS are: (1) less noise at larger angles, (2) the precision of measurements are greatly improved by detecting at several angles, and (3) the ability to detect angular variation allows determination of size, branching, aggregation, and molecular conformation.

4.5 Size exclusion chromatography uses columns, which are typically packed with polymer particles containing a network of uniform pores into which solute and solvent molecules can diffuse. While in the pores, molecules are effectively trapped and removed from the flow of the mobile phase. The average residence time in the pores depends upon the size of the solute molecules. Molecules that are larger than the average pore size of the packing are excluded and experience virtually no retention; these are eluted first, in the void volume of the column. Molecules, which may penetrate the pores will have a larger volume available for diffusion, they will suffer retention depending on their molecular size, with the smaller molecules eluting last.

4.6 For polyelectrolytes, dialysis against the elution buffer has been suggested, in order to eliminate Donnan-type artifacts in the molar mass determination by light scattering (1, 2).<sup>5</sup> However, in the present method, the size exclusion chromatography step preceding the light scatter detection is an efficient substitute for a dialysis step. The sample is separated on SEC columns with large excess of elution buffer for 30 to 40 min, and it is therefore in full equilibrium with the elution buffer when it reaches the MALS detector.

#### 5. Materials

##### 5.1 Chemicals:

5.1.1 Chitosan or chitosan salt sample.

5.1.2 Deionized water (Milli-Q Plus or equivalent; conductivity < 10  $\mu\text{S/cm}$ ).

5.1.3  $\text{CH}_3\text{COONH}_4$  (ammonium acetate).

5.1.4 Pullulan standards. (See [Note 2](#).)

NOTE 2—A series of linear homopolysaccharides with sufficiently narrow dispersity to be suitable for utilization as molar mass calibration standards in aqueous eluent.

##### 5.2 Mobile Phase:

5.2.1 For SEC-MALS of chitosan and chitosan salts, a mobile phase stock solution of 0.40 mol/L  $\text{CH}_3\text{COONH}_4$  in deionized water is prepared.

5.2.2 The stock solution can be stored cool (3 to 8°C) for 6 months. Before use as a mobile phase, the stock solution is diluted 1:1 (v/v) with deionized water and passed through a 0.22  $\mu\text{m}$  filter.

##### 5.3 Instruments:

5.3.1 Analytical balance (0.1 mg).

5.3.2 Shaking device.

5.3.3 pH meter.

5.3.4 HPLC system with injector, pump, degassing unit.

5.3.5 Size exclusion columns: TSK-Gel  $\text{PW}_{\text{XL}}$  columns from Tosoh Biosep., for example,  $\text{PW}_{\text{XL}}$ -guard column + G6000  $\text{PW}_{\text{XL}}$  + G5000  $\text{PW}_{\text{XL}}$  + G3000  $\text{PW}_{\text{XL}}$  (last in the series), or equivalent.

5.3.6 Refractive Index (RI) detector, with a known calibration constant ( $dn/dV$ ).

5.3.7 Multiple Angle Laser Light Scattering (MALS) detector, with known calibration constant.

5.3.8 Computer with suitable software.

#### 6. Procedure

##### 6.1 Preparation of Standards and Chitosan Salt Samples for SEC-MALS:

6.1.1 Samples are prepared at a concentration suitable for injection of 200  $\mu\text{L}$  of sample.

6.1.2 Dissolve all samples in deionized water at twice the required concentration for molar mass determination by shaking at about 100  $\text{min}^{-1}$  overnight at cool temperature (3 to 8°C).

6.1.3 Dilute samples 1+1 with stock solution of mobile phase and shake gently for a few seconds.

6.1.4 Pass all samples through a 0.45  $\mu\text{m}$  filter, and transfer to HPLC vials.

<sup>5</sup> The boldface numbers in parentheses refer to a list of references at the end of this standard.