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# Standard Specification for Medical-Grade Ultra-High Molecular Weight Polyethylene Yarns<sup>1</sup>

This standard is issued under the fixed designation F2848; 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 ( $\epsilon$ ) indicates an editorial change since the last revision or reapproval.

## 1. Scope

1.1 This specification covers ultra-high molecular weight polyethylene (UHMWPE) yarns intended for use in medical devices or components of medical devices, such as sutures and ligament fixations. This specification covers natural (non-colored) and pigmented (colored) yarns.

1.2 This standard is intended to describe the requirements and the procedures to be followed for testing UHMWPE yarns as a component for medical devices prior to manufacturing processes of the medical device such as fabric formation, assembling and sterilization. This specification does not purport to address the requirements for the finished medical devices or the testing that is needed for medical devices that are fabricated from the components specified herein.

1.3 The values stated in SI units are to be regarded as standard. No other units of measurement are included in this standard.

1.4 *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.*

1.5 *This international standard was developed in accordance with internationally recognized principles on standardization established in the Decision on Principles for the Development of International Standards, Guides and Recommendations issued by the World Trade Organization Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Committee.*

## 2. Referenced Documents

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

**D792** Test Methods for Density and Specific Gravity (Relative Density) of Plastics by Displacement

**D885/D885M** Test Methods for Tire Cords, Tire Cord Fabrics, and Industrial Filament Yarns Made from Manufactured Organic-Base Fibers

**D1505** Test Method for Density of Plastics by the Density-Gradient Technique

**D1601** Test Method for Dilute Solution Viscosity of Ethylene Polymers

**D1907/D1907M** Test Method for Linear Density of Yarn (Yarn Number) by the Skein Method

**D2256/D2256M** Test Method for Tensile Properties of Yarns by the Single-Strand Method

**F748** Practice for Selecting Generic Biological Test Methods for Materials and Devices

**F756** Practice for Assessment of Hemolytic Properties of Materials

**F2625** Test Method for Measurement of Enthalpy of Fusion, Percent Crystallinity, and Melting Point of Ultra-High-Molecular Weight Polyethylene by Means of Differential Scanning Calorimetry

### 2.2 ISO Standards:<sup>3</sup>

**ISO 1628-3** Plastics—Determination of the Viscosity of Polymers in Dilute Solution Using Capillary Viscometers—Part 3: Polyethylenes and Polypropylenes

**ISO 2062** Textiles—Yarns from Packages—Determination of Single-end Breaking Force and Elongation at Break

**ISO 10993-1** Biological Evaluation of Medical Devices Part 1 – Evaluation and testing within a risk management process

**ISO 10993-4** Biological Evaluation of Medical Devices Part 4 – Selection of tests for interactions with blood

<sup>1</sup> This specification is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee F04 on Medical and Surgical Materials and Devices and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee F04.11 on Polymeric Materials.

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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 International Organization for Standardization (ISO), 1, ch. de la Voie-Creuse, Case postale 56, CH-1211, Geneva 20, Switzerland, http://www.iso.ch.

**TABLE 1 Requirements for UHMWPE Yarns**

Property	Test Method	Requirement
Density, g/cm <sup>3</sup>	Test Methods <b>D792</b> or <b>D1505</b>	0.95 - 1.00
Melting temperature – peak, °C	Test Method <b>F2625</b>	140 - 150
Filament Linear Density, dtex (Maximum)	<b>6.3</b>	2.7
Intrinsic Viscosity, dl/g (Minimum)	<b>6.4</b>	15
Tensile Strength, cN/dtex (Minimum)	<b>6.5</b>	26
Tensile Modulus, cN/dtex (Minimum)	<b>6.5</b>	750
Elongation-at-break, %	<b>6.5</b>	2 - 5
<i>Additional requirement for colored yarn:</i>		
Pigment content, wt.% (Maximum)	<b>6.2</b>	2
Chromium-cobalt-aluminum oxide		

- [ISO 10993-5 Biological Evaluation of Medical Devices Part 5 – Tests for in vitro cytotoxicity](#)
- [ISO 10993-10 Biological Evaluation of Medical Devices – Part 10: Tests for irritation and skin sensitization](#)
- [ISO 10993-17 Biological Evaluation of Medical Devices Part 17 – Establishment for allowable limits for leachable substances](#)
- [ISO 10993-18 Biological Evaluation of Medical Devices Part 18 – Chemical characterization of materials](#)
- [ISO 13485 Medical Devices – Quality Management Systems – Requirements for regulatory purposes](#)
- [ISO 14971 Medical Devices – Application of risk management to Medical Devices](#)

### 2.3 Other Documents:

- [ICH Q3C\(R3\) International Conference on Harmonisation of Technical Requirements for Registration of Pharmaceuticals for Human Use, Quality Guideline: Impurities: Residual Solvents<sup>4</sup>](#)
- [US Code of Federal Regulations—CFR section 21 Parts 70, 71, 73, 74 and 80 on color additives for medical devices<sup>5</sup>](#)

## 3. Terminology

### 3.1 Definitions of Terms Specific to This Standard:

- 3.1.1 *UHMWPE filament*—molecularly oriented highly crystalline fiber spun from virgin UHMWPE polymer powder.
- 3.1.2 *UHMWPE yarn*—a continuous strand of more than one UHMWPE filaments in a form suitable for operations such as weaving, knitting, etc.
- 3.1.3 *linear density*—mass per length, expressed in dtex (mass in grams per 10 000 metres).

<sup>4</sup> Available from International Conference on Harmonisation of Technical Requirements for Registration of Pharmaceuticals for Human Use (ICH), ICH Secretariat, c/o IFPMA, 15 ch. Louis-Dunant, P.O. Box 195, 1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland, <http://www.ich.org>.

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Government Publishing Office, 710 North Capitol Street N.W., Washington, DC (corner of North Capitol and H Streets), [www.gpo.gov/about/bookstore.htm](http://www.gpo.gov/about/bookstore.htm)

#### 3.1.3.1 Discussion—

Tex is a unit of measure for the linear mass density of yarns and is defined as the mass in g/1000 m. Because of the low mass of yarns used in medical applications, decitex (abbreviated as dtex) is more commonly used, and is mass in g/10 000 m. Another related unit of measure for the linear mass density is denier, which is defined as g/9000 m.

3.1.4 *production liquid*—any liquid(s) used in the production of the filaments and yarns, such as solvents and extraction solutions.

## 4. UHMWPE Filament and Yarn Requirements

### 4.1 Compositional Requirements:

4.1.1 Maximum acceptable limits for residual constituents shall be determined based on prevention of adverse effects when used in a medical application (see also 4.4). Residual constituents can be residues from the used production liquids, processing aids, or residual elements from raw materials.

4.1.2 Residual production liquids shall be assessed with regard to toxicity hazards, with a maximum acceptable limit consistent with ICH Q3C(R3). If no ICH concentration guideline has been established for a utilized production liquid, a toxicity assessment and corresponding potential leaching characteristics for the identified potential toxic ingredients should be performed in accordance with 4.4 to establish a maximum residual level.

4.1.3 Potential effects of residual production liquid(s) on mechanical or physical yarn properties should be considered as well for establishing maximum limits.

4.1.4 For decalin as solvent, the residual level has been established in accordance with 4.4 and 4.1.3 and shall be less than 100 mg/kg (see 6.1).

4.1.5 In case a color additive or pigment is added to the yarn, this should be compliant to the FDA regulation as published in the US Code of Federal Regulations - CFR section 21, parts 70, 71, 73, 74 and 80 on color additives for medical devices.

### 4.2 Physical Requirements:

4.2.1 The density of the yarn shall comply with the requirement listed in [Table 1](#).

4.2.2 The linear density requirement of single filaments is listed in [Table 1](#).

4.2.3 The intrinsic viscosity requirement for the UHMWPE yarn is listed in [Table 1](#).

#### 4.3 *Mechanical Requirements:*

4.3.1 Tensile testing shall be conducted after sufficient conditioning to the laboratory conditions, with a minimum of 2 h to achieve uniform temperatures within the yarn package.

4.3.2 UHMWPE yarns shall meet the tensile requirements on strength, modulus, and elongation-at-break as listed for individual data as listed in [Table 1](#). Note that tensile properties of the final medical device depend on the construction of yarns used therein.

#### 4.4 *Biocompatibility and Biosafety Risk Assessment Requirements:*

4.4.1 The first principle of ISO 10993-1 states that biological evaluation of any material or medical device intended for use in humans shall form part of a structured biological evaluation program within a risk management process in accordance with ISO 14971. This should be addressed through chemical characterization of the material, following ISO 10993-18, and toxicological assessment based on ISO 10993-17. See the following for more specific specifications for this medical-grade UHMWPE yarn:

4.4.1.1 The full quantitative composition of the yarn as component supplied should be established, including residual processing aids and relevant impurities or trace elements; hereinafter referred to as ingredients.

4.4.1.2 For each ingredient, a toxicological assessment should be performed based on ISO 10993-17, which means that Tolerable Intake (TI) values in mg/kg bw/day are derived based on collected information on known critical adverse effects.

4.4.1.3 A worst-case assessment should be performed for each ingredient. Determine whether the quantity established in [4.4.1.1](#) is below the TI as defined in [4.4.1.2](#) for the application under consideration or, if the application is unknown, for 1 g of yarn (see [Appendix X1.3](#)), assuming a body weight of 5070 kg and full ~~bio-availability~~bioavailability of the ingredients within 1 day. The 70 kg body weight is not appropriate for pediatric and/or neonate applications. A lower body weight is required for calculations for these applications.

4.4.1.4 If the ~~worst-case~~worst-case assessment indicates that the TI can be exceeded, perform extraction and/or leaching studies in accordance with ISO ~~10993-18~~10993-18 and determine whether the extracted/leached amount is below the TI for the application under consideration or, if the application is unknown, for 1 g of ~~yarn~~yarn assuming a body weight of 5070 kg and ~~bio-availability~~bioavailability of the extracted components/leachables within 1 day. The 70 kg body weight is not appropriate for pediatric and/or neonate applications. A lower body weight is required for calculations for these applications.

4.4.1.5 Based on the outcome of previous steps, maximum residual levels should be set for ~~the~~toxicologically critical ingredients (~~refer to~~(see [4.1](#))).

4.4.2 For a proper biosafety analysis, chemical and biological testing should always be combined, especially since not all potential adverse effects can be derived from toxicological evaluation of ~~only individual ingredients~~only ingredients. As a minimum, the following biological tests should be conducted for medical-grade UHMWPE yarn:

4.4.2.1 *Cytotoxicity*, in accordance with ISO 10993-5.

4.4.2.2 *Hemolysis*, in accordance with Practice [F756](#) and following ISO 10993-4.

4.4.2.3 *Acute Irritation*, in accordance with ISO 10993-10, with a preference for *in vitro* methods.<sup>6</sup>

4.4.2.4 *Sensitization*, in accordance with ISO 10993-10, with a preference for the Guinea Pig Maximization test.

4.4.2.5 Results of above biological tests for the yarns cannot replace biological evaluation and testing in accordance with ISO 10993-1 for the final medical device. Additional endpoints may be necessary; therefore the final medical device manufacturer should evaluate the finished component or medical device for the intended use in accordance with ISO 10993-1.

4.4.3 The biosafety assessment described above should be made available in a material master file. General results should be made available on a certification document for a specific product yarn design and corresponding yarn manufacturing process.

4.4.4 It is important to note that biological safety evaluation is a continuous process. In case of any change in yarn design or its manufacturing process, the yarn manufacturer should evaluate the consequences on biological safety and the material master file should be updated accordingly. The user or final medical device manufacturer should evaluate the consequences on biological safety of any additional processes (~~for example,~~(such as, for example, from cleaning and sterilization) and shall qualify the finished component or medical device for the intended use.

## 5. Sampling

5.1 Compliance with this specification shall be determined by sampling sizes and procedures as agreed upon between the purchaser and seller.

## 6. Test Methods

6.1 Residual production liquids shall be determined by gas chromatography or other suitable, validated analytical methods for the specific liquids used to produce the yarn to a sufficient accuracy in relation to the specified value.

<sup>6</sup> *In vitro* methods are preferred above *in vivo* methods to limit animal testing, also since the medical-grade UHMWPE yarn component is not a final finished device.