# Analysis of Carboxymethyl Cellulose via GPC Viscometry

## Application Note

Food Testing & Agric


### Authors

Graham Cleaver
Agilent Technologies, Inc.


### Introduction

Carboxymethyl cellulose (CMC) is a derivative of cellulose with carboxymethyl groups (-$CH_2COOH$) attached at some of the hydroxyl groups that typically make up the cellulose backbone. The general structure is shown in Figure 1.

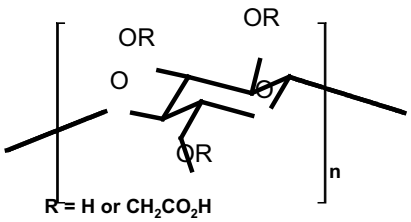


Figure 1. General structure of the CMC monomeric repeat unit

Carboxymethyl cellulose has useful material properties such as high solution viscosity. This coupled with the low toxicity and non-allergenic nature of the material results in its widespread use within the food science arena. In addition, CMC is also used in many wide ranging final end user products, such as toothpaste, eye drops and water-based paints.


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## Methods and Materials

Analysis of CMC materials can easily be achieved by gel permeation chromatography (GPC) with high efficiency Agilent PL aquagel-OH 30 8 µm columns and the Agilent PL-GPC 50 Integrated GPC/SEC system equipped with RI and viscometry detection.

The CMC sample was prepared at 0.2% (w/v) in 0.2 M $NaNO_3$, 0.01 M $NaH_2PO_4$, pH 7 buffer solution and allowed to dissolve at room temperature overnight. It was injected without further treatment.

**Conditions**

| | |
|---|---|
| Sample: | Carboxymethyl cellulose |
| Column: | PL aquagel-OH 30 8 µm, 7.5 × 300 mm (part number PL1120-6830) |
| Eluent: | 0.2 M $NaNO_3$, 0.01 M $NaH_2PO_4$, pH 7 |
| Flow Rate: | 1.0 mL/min |
| Inj Vol: | 100 µL |
| Sample Conc: | 2.0 mg/mL |
| Temp: | Ambient |
| Calibrants: | Agilent PEG/PEO EasiVial |
| Detector: | PL-GPC 50 (Differential Refractive Index + Viscometer) |

## Results and Discussion

Figure 2 shows the dual detector chromatogram for the CMC sample. Figure 3 shows the molecular weight distribution calculated via the universal calibration, a technique utilizing the viscometer to determine molecular weights independent of the chemistry of the polymer calibrations employed. Figure 4 shows the Mark-Houwink plot generated from the viscometry data, the curvature can provide information about the structural or chemical homogeneity as a function of molecular weight.

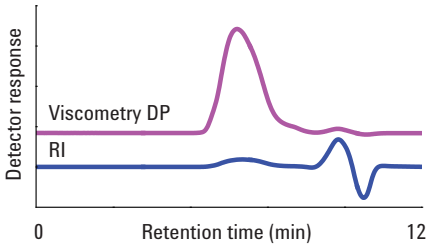


Figure 2. RI/viscometry raw data chromatograms obtained from the carboxymethyl cellulose sample

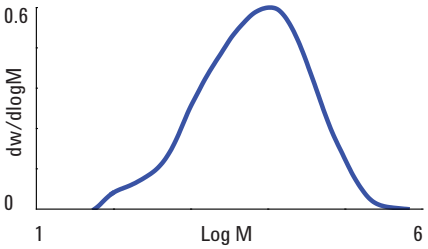


Figure 3. Molecular weight distributions obtained from the carboxymethyl cellulose sample

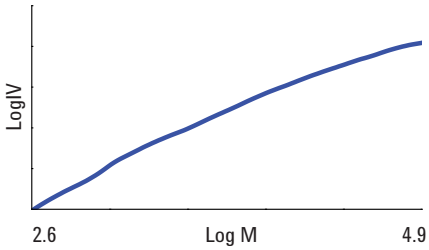


Figure 4. Mark-Houwink plot obtained from the carboxymethyl cellulose sample

## Conclusion

A sample of carboxymethyl cellulose was successfully analyzed using a GPC system comprising a PL aquagel-OH column and PL-GPC 50 instrument, incorporating refractive index and viscometry detection.

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