# **Method Development Guidelines:**

# Solid Phase Extraction Using ISOLUTE® PSA SPE Sorbents for the Extraction of Aqueous Samples

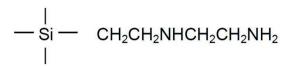


Figure 1. Structure of ISOLUTE® PSA sorbent.

# **ISOLUTE®** Anion Exchange Sorbents

#### NH2, PSA, SAX and PE-AX

The ISOLUTE® family of anion exchange sorbents are used to extract organic anions (acidic compounds capable of exhibiting a negative charge) from both aqueous and non-aqueous matrixes.

Anion exchange SPE can be accomplished by strong (very high  $pK_a$ ) or weak (lower  $pK_a$ ) ion exchangers.

PSA (a primary/secondary amine phase – see structure above) is a weak anion exchanger, with pK<sub>a</sub>s of approximately 10.1 and 10.9. It is used for the extraction of anions that exhibit a negative charge at pH 8 or lower. The charge on the sorbent is neutralized at pH 12 or higher. This can be useful for the extraction of analytes with a permanent negative charge (such as strong acids) which cannot be neutralized by pH control. PSA should also be used:

- » For analytes unstable at low pHs.
- » For analytes containing sulfate or phosphate groups which are difficult to elute from strong anion exchange (SAX) sorbents.

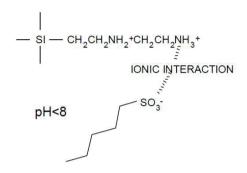
ISOLUTE NH2 (an aminopropyl phase) is a weak anion exchanger, with a p $K_a$  of 9.8. It is used for the extraction of anions that exhibit a negative charge at pH 7.8 or lower. The charge on the sorbent is neutralized at pH 11.8 or higher.

ISOLUTE SAX (a quaternary amine phase) is a strong anion exchanger manufactured with chloride as the counter ion. ISOLUTE PE-AX is similar to SAX, but is manufactured with an acetate counter ion. Both sorbents maintain permanent positive charge over the whole pH range (pH 1–14). ISOLUTE SAX and PE-AX have limited non-polar character, so secondary non-polar interactions with analytes are minimal. This means that organic solvent is often unnecessary in the elution solvent to overcome secondary non-polar interactions.

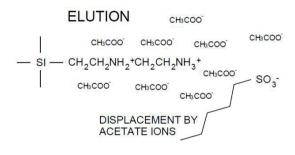
## Retention and Flution Characteristics

Retention and elution characteristics of ISOLUTE PSA are illustrated.

# RETENTION



Analyte has a permanent negative charge



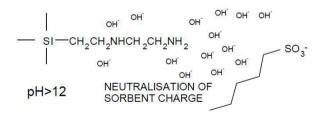


Figure 2. Retention and elution using ISOLUTE® PSA.

RETENTION: At pH  $\leq 8$  , the sorbent is essentially 100% charged. Retention is due to ionic interactions.

ELUTION: On the addition of a high ionic strength buffer, the analyte is displaced from the sorbent due to competition with other anions. Elution can also be accomplished by application of a solvent of pH 12 or above, which neutralizes the charge on the sorbent.



In method development using ISOLUTE® PSA, the following points are important:

# Sample Pre-treatment

## **Ionic Strength Control**

lonic strength of the sample should be reduced to 50 mM by dilution with deionized water or low ionic strength buffer in order to facilitate maximum retention of the analytes. The capacity the ISOLUTE PSA sorbent is approximately 0.4 mM / g. The analyte must compete with other anions in the sample for ion exchange sites, so retention of the analyte is reduced when the ionic strength of the sample is high. Dilution will also reduce sample viscosity, to ensure a free-flowing sample. The selectivity of the buffer anion chosen should be considered. Analyte retention is facilitated by buffers that contain anions of lower selectivity than the analyte. The selectivity of some common anions is as follows (ions on the right will displace those on the left):

OH' < acetate < formate < HCO<sub>3</sub> · < Cl · < HSO<sub>3</sub> · < Cl · < HSO<sub>3</sub> · < Ch · < citrate < benzene sulfonate

ISOLUTE PSA is shipped as the free base.

#### pH Control

To ensure that total ionization of the sorbent has occurred, the pH of the sample should be adjusted to 8 or below [see the two (2) pH unit rule in the appendix]. Buffering for pH control should be performed with the lowest strength buffer that will maintain pH, usually 10–20 mM.

# Column Solvation and Equilibration

ISOLUTE PSA columns should be solvated with methanol, acetonitrile or THF.

The pH of the equilibration solvent must be optimized to maintain ionization of the analyte upon loading. Ionic strength should be the same as or very similar to that of the sample, ideally not more than 0.05 M. In addition, the equilibrium buffer is used to ensure the presence of an appropriate counter ion on the column.

# Sample Loading

For ISOLUTE PSA columns, typical flow rates are 1 mL/min for 1 mL columns, 3 mL/min for 3 mL columns and 7 mL/min for 6 mL columns. The ion exchange process will not occur efficiently if the flow rate is too high.

# Interference Elution

For ISOLUTE PSA columns, ionic strength and pH control should be maintained at this stage to prevent analyte loss. The same buffer as the equilibration buffer is often suitable. Methanol or acetonitrile (5-30%) in buffer is often suitable for removing lipophilic interferences.

# **Analyte Elution**

## Displacement of the Analyte by Mass Action

High ionic strength (> 0.1 M) buffers can be used for elution. The high concentration of the anions in the buffer will compete with the anionic analyte for the cationic sites on the sorbent. This will cause elution of the analyte. For analytes with two negative charges, buffers of > 0.2 M should be used. Buffers containing ions with a higher affinity for the sorbent than the analyte can be used for elution by displacement of the anionic analyte. As ISOLUTE PSA exerts very weak secondary (non-polar) interactions, the presence of an organic component is not necessary for elution.

# **Neutralization of the Charge on the Sorbent**

Strong anions can be eluted using a buffer or solvent adjusted to two (2) pH units above the  $pK_a$  of the sorbent (i.e. to pH 12 or above).

If a non-aqueous elution solvent is required, for example if the eluent is to be injected directly into a GC, evaporated to give a higher concentration of analyte, or derivatized prior to analysis, then organic solvents, modified with an acid such formic or trifluoroacetic acid (2-5%) are suitable.

# Neutralization of the Charge on the Analyte (Weak Anions Only)

Weak anions can be eluted using a buffer or solvent adjusted to two (2) pH units below the  $pK_a$  of the analyte.





# **Appendix**

# The Two (2) pH Unit Rule

The pK<sub>a</sub> of a molecular functional group is defined as the pH at which 50% of this group in solution are charged, and 50% are uncharged. Each pH unit change affects the percentage of charged or uncharged groups by a factor of 10, so it is sensible to perform extractions at a pH at least 2 pH units from the  $pK_a$ value, to ensure that 99.5% of the functional groups are in the desired state of ionization.

Table 1. Effect of pH on the dissociation of a weak acid with a pKa value of 4.0.

Analyte	% free acid (uncharged)	% dissociated (charged)
4.0	50	50
5.0	5.0	95
6.0	0.5	99.5

Table 2. Effect of pH on the dissociation of the conjugate acid of a weak base with a pK<sub>a</sub> value of 9.0.

рH	% free base (uncharged)	% dissociated (charged)
9.0	50	50
8.0	5.0	95
7.0	0.5	99.5

EUROPE
Main Office: +46 18 565900
Toll Free: +800 18 565710
Fax: +46 18 591922
Order Tel: +46 18 565710
Order Fax: +46 18 565705
order@biotage.com

Support Tel: +46 18 56 59 11 Support Fax: + 46 18 56 57 11

eu-1-pointsupport@biotage.com us-1-pointsupport@biotage.com

## NORTH & LATIN AMERICA

Main Office: +1 704 654 4900 Toll Free: +1 800 446 4752 Fax: +1 704 654 4917 Order Tel: +1 704 654 4900 Order Fax: +1 434 296 8217 ordermailbox@biotage.com Support Tel: +1 800 446 4752 Outside US: +1 704 654 4900

#### JAPAN

Tel: +81 3 5627 3123 Fax: +81 3 5627 3121 jp\_order@biotage.com jp-1-pointsupport@biotage.com cn-1-pointsupport@biotage.com kr-1-pointsupport@biotage.com

#### CHINA

Tel: +86 21 2898 6655 Fax: +86 21 2898 6153 cn\_order@biotage.com

#### KOREA

Tel: + 82 31 706 8500 Fax:+ 82 31 706 8510 korea\_info@biotage.com

Distributors in other regions are listed on www.biotage.com

