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Review Article

Surfactant Modified/Mediated Thin-Layer Chromatographic Systems for the Analysis of Amino Acids

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This review incorporates a large number of chromatographic systems modified by the surfactants. A large number of solvent systems and stationary phases are summarized in this paper. Three different kinds of surfactants (anionic, cationic, and nonionic) are used as modifiers for stationary phases as well as solvent systems. Surfactants are used at all the three different concentration levels (below, above, and at critical micelle concentration) where surfactants behave differently. Modifications of both stationary phases and solvent systems by surfactants produced a new generation of chromatographic systems. Microemulsion solvent systems are also incorporated in this paper. Microemulsion thin-layer chromatography is a new approach in the field of chromatography.

1. Introduction

It is a well-known fact that amino acids are building blocks of proteins. Amino acids are also essential ingredients of diets of all living beings. Amino acids are biologically important biochemical molecules commonly used in nutritional supplements such as glutamic acid as flavor enhancer [1] and aspartame as a low calorie artificial sweetener [2]. Because of the enormous applications of amino acids in many biological systems chromatographic study of these molecules is very important. This review article deals with the surfactant modified thin-layer chromatographic systems used for the analysis of amino acids.

Surfactants are the promising compounds for the modification of chromatographic data. The unusual results are obtained by using surfactants in chromatographic system as compared to other chemical compounds. Surfactants are the class of compounds which entirely modify the efficiencies of different phases involved in the chromatography. Surfactants expand the potentialities of TLC by resolving complex mixtures especially those containing neutral and charged compounds. Sumina et al. [3] discussed the modification of TLC by surfactants in three different ways such as (a) use of micellar solutions as mobile phase, (b) use of molecular solutions of ionic surfactants below critical micelle concentration, and (c) use of surfactants for the modification of surfaces by impregnating the surfaces with aq. methanolic or ethanolic solution of surfactants.

According to the literature surfactants provided important separations of amino acids. Some of the separations are very unique and scientifically important. On the other hand micellar thin-layer chromatography (MTLC) has got many advantages over conventional TLC. The most exciting features found in MTLC as compared to conventional thin-layer chromatography that leads to new generation of chromatographic systems are (a) double solvent front that is observed in chromatogram, (b) modifications of adsorbent surfaces, and (c) a change in elution order of compounds [3]. The use of aqueous micellar mobile phases is free from some disadvantages such as strong smell, volatility, flammability,