Multi-Use for MOM

Neutralization Reactions

FLINN SCIENTIFIC CHEM FAX!

Introduction

Mix milk of magnesia (MOM) with universal indicator and observe the dramatic rainbow of colors as the antacid dissolves in the simulated stomach acid! This is a great demonstration to teach concepts of acids and bases, solubility, K_{sp} and the Tyndall effect.

Concepts

- Acid–base neutralization
- Solubility and K_{sp}
- Suspension

Materials

Milk of magnesia, 20 mL	Beral-type pipets, 2
Hydrochloric acid, HCl, 3 *M*, approximately 20 mL	Graduated cylinder, 25-mL
Universal indicator solution, 1%, 4–5 mL	Ice, crushed (or ice cubes)
Water, distilled or deionized, 800 mL	Magnetic stir plate (or stirring rod)
Beaker, 1-L (or other large beaker)	Magnetic stir bar

Safety Precautions

Milk of magnesia is intended for laboratory use only; it has been stored with other non–food-grade laboratory chemicals and is not meant for human consumption. Hydrochloric acid solution is toxic by ingestion and inhalation and is corrosive to skin and eyes. Universal indicator solution is an alcohol-based flammable solution. Wear chemical splash goggles, chemical-resistant gloves, and a chemical-resistant apron. Please review current Material Safety Data Sheets for additional safety, handling, and disposal information.

Procedure

1. Measure 20 mL of milk of magnesia using a graduated cylinder and pour it into a 1-L beaker.
2. Place the 1-L beaker on a magnetic stir plate. Add a magnetic stir bar to the beaker.
3. Add water and crushed ice (or ice cubes) to give a total volume of approximately 800 mL. Turn on the stir plate so as to create a vortex in the mixture.
4. Add about 4–5 mL (about 2 pipets full) of universal indicator solution. Watch as the white suspension of milk of magnesia turns to a deep purple color. The color indicates that the solution is basic.
5. Add 2–3 mL (1 pipet full) of 3 *M* HCl. The mixture quickly turns red and then goes through the entire universal indicator color range back to purple.
6. Repeat this process, adding HCl one pipet full at a time, waiting after each addition until the mixture turns back to blue–purple.
7. The process can be repeated a number of times before all of the $Mg(OH)_2$ has dissolved and has reacted with the HCl. As more acid is added, the color changes will occur more rapidly and eventually the suspension will be completely dissolved. This will be evidenced by a clear, red solution.

Disposal

Please consult your current *Flinn Scientific Catalog/Reference Manual* for general guidelines and specific procedures governing the disposal of laboratory waste. Neutralize the final solution according to Flinn Suggested Disposal Method #24b. Excess milk of magnesia can be disposed of according to Flinn Suggested Disposal Method #26a.

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Tips

- If a 1-L beaker is not available, use a 600-mL or 400-mL beaker. Adjust chemical amounts accordingly. *Note:* The actual milk of magnesia concentration does not have to be exact in order for the demonstration to work.
- If a magnetic stir plate is not available, the mixture can be stirred with a stirring rod.
- The acid used in the demonstration is 3 M hydrochloric acid (HCl). Actual stomach acid has a pH of about 0.1 HCl. However, 3 M HCl is used in this demonstration in order to limit the total acid volume and allow the reaction to go to completion with a reasonable volume of acid. If desired, dilute the 3 M acid to 0.1 M and perform the experiment as written.
- The reaction is performed on ice in order to slow down the color changes so that all colors in the universal indicator color range can be viewed. The reaction may be performed without the use of ice.
- Consider performing this demonstration at different temperatures—5 °C, 25 °C, and 60 °C—to compare the effect of temperature on the rate of reaction.

Discussion

The active ingredient in milk of magnesia is magnesium hydroxide, $Mg(OH)_2$. Magnesium hydroxide forms a suspension in water since it has a very low solubility—0.0009 g/100 mL in cold water and 0.004 g/100 mL in hot water.

Initially in the demonstration, the solution is basic due to the small amount of $Mg(OH)_2$ that goes into solution. The universal indicator gives the entire solution a violet color, indicating a pH of about 10. (See Universal Indicator Color Chart below.) Upon adding hydrochloric acid, the mixture quickly turns red because the acid disperses throughout the beaker, first neutralizing the small amount of dissolved $Mg(OH)_2$, and then turning the solution acidic from the excess acid that is present.

Universal Indicator Color Chart							
Color	Red	Orange	Yellow	Green	Green–blue	Blue	Violet
pH	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

The excess acid causes more $Mg(OH)_2$ from the suspension to gradually dissolve. As more of the $Mg(OH)_2$ goes into solution, the acid is neutralized and eventually the solution becomes basic again from the excess $Mg(OH)_2$ that is present. The addition of universal indicator allows this process to be observed. During the process, the color of the mixture goes through the entire universal indicator color range—from red to orange to yellow to green to blue and finally back to violet. By adding more acid, the process can be repeated several times before all of the $Mg(OH)_2$ is dissolved and eventually neutralized.

Magnesium hydroxide is classified as a weak base (in most textbooks) due to its very limited solubility in water. This limited solubility makes it an ideal compound to use in commercial antacids since it slowly dissolves as it neutralizes stomach acid rather than dissolving all at once. The neutralization reaction is the reaction between $Mg(OH)_2$ (a weak base) and HCl (a strong acid). The overall equation for the reaction is shown in Equation 1 below

$$Mg(OH)_2(s) + 2H^+(aq) \rightarrow 2H_2O(l) + Mg^{2+}(aq) \qquad \textit{Equation 1}$$

The reacting species for the strong acid, HCl, is the hydrogen ion, H^+. In contrast, since $Mg(OH)_2$ is a weak base, the principal reacting species is the undissociated $Mg(OH)_2$ molecule. The acid–base reaction involves the $Mg(OH)_2$ molecule and the H^+ ion as reactants. The products are a H_2O molecule and a Mg^{2+} ion in solution. Because the chloride ion, Cl^-, from HCl is a spectator ion, it is not included in the net ionic equation.

While $Mg(OH)_2$ is practically insoluble, a certain amount of $Mg(OH)_2$ dissociates into ions when put in water. The extent of dissociation of $Mg(OH)_2$ is indicated by its solubility product constant, K_{sp}. The K_{sp} at 25 °C for $Mg(OH)_2$ is 6×10^{-12}, indicating that only a small amount of $Mg(OH)_2$ dissociates into ions and the reaction equilibrium lies far to the left, according to Equation 2 below.

$$Mg(OH)_2(s) \leftrightarrows Mg^{2+}(aq) + 2OH^-(aq) \qquad \textit{Equation 2}$$

In the demonstration, the initial milk of magnesia suspension in water contains very few Mg^{2+} and OH^- ions before the acid is added. As HCl is added to the beaker containing milk of magnesia, the H^+ ions from the HCl react with the OH^- ions (those that are actually in solution from the $Mg(OH)_2$) according to Equation 3 below.

$$H^+(aq) + OH^-(aq) \rightarrow H_2O(l) \qquad \textit{Equation 3}$$

The reaction between H^+ (stomach acid) and OH^- (antacid) to form water uses up some of the OH^- ions and drives Equation 2 to the right, causing more $Mg(OH)_2$ to dissolve and dissociate into ions. As OH^- ions are removed from solution by the H^+ ions, more and more $Mg(OH)_2$ is forced to dissociate to replace those ions, according to LeChâtelier's Principle. As more acid is added, the $Mg(OH)_2$ continues to dissociate until all of it is dissolved and Equation 2 lies all the way to the right. The final solution in the milk of magnesia demonstration will thus be clear and acidic (red in color from the universal indicator), indicating that the $Mg(OH)_2$ is fully dissolved. At this point, the "antacid power" or "acid-neutralizing ability" of the milk of magnesia is depleted.

Connecting to the National Standards

This laboratory activity relates to the following National Science Education Standards (1996):

Unifying Concepts and Processes: Grades K–12
Evidence, models, and explanation
Content Standards: Grades 5–8
Content Standard B: Physical Science, properties and changes of properties in matter
Content Standard F: Science in Personal and Social Perspectives; personal health
Content Standards: Grades 9–12
Content Standard B: Physical Science, structure and properties of matter, chemical reactions
Content Standard F: Science in Personal and Social Perspectives; personal and community health

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References

Summerlin, L. R.; Borgford, C. L.; Ealy, J. B. *Chemical Demonstrations: A Sourcebook for Teachers*, Vol. 2; American Chemical Society: Washington, DC. 1988; p 173.

Flinn Scientific—Teaching Chemistry™ eLearning Video Series

A video of the *Multi-Use for MOM* activity, presented by Penney Sconzo, is available in *Neutralization Reactions*, part of the Flinn Scientific—Teaching Chemistry eLearning Video Series.

Materials for *Multi-Use for MOM* are available from Flinn Scientific, Inc.

Materials required to perform this activity are available in the *Upset Tummy?—MOM to the Rescue!—Chemical Demonstration Kit* available from Flinn Scientific. Materials may also be purchased separately.

Catalog No.	Description
AP5934	Upset Tummy? MOM to the Rescue!—Chemical Demonstration Kit
H0034	Hydrochloric Acid Solution, 3 M, 500 mL
M0122	Magnesium Hydroxide Solution, Saturated, 500 mL
U0001	Universal Indicator, 100 mL
AP8578	Mini Magnetic Stirrer

Consult your *Flinn Scientific Catalog/Reference Manual* for current prices.