

Thrombin Kits

About the Kits

Thrombin Cleavage Capture Kit	69022-3
Biotinylated Thrombin	69672-3
Thrombin, Restriction Grade	69671-3

Description

Thrombin is an endoprotease that naturally functions as a blood clotting factor to convert fibrinogen to fibrin. Human thrombin is one of the most active site-specific proteases, which is an advantage because a very low mass ratio of enzyme to target protein is needed for efficient cleavage. Although no single consensus sequence describes the specificity of thrombin cutting, cleavage frequently occurs after the proline-arginine residue pair when properly exposed in a three-dimensional structure.

Novagen's Biotinylated Thrombin and Restriction Grade Thrombin are functionally tested for specific cleavage of the sequence LeuValProArg↓GlySer in recombinant fusion proteins. This thrombin recognition sequence is encoded by many popular expression vectors, including numerous vectors offered by Novagen. The cleavage site is usually located between the cloning sites and other vector-encoded fusion peptide sequences, which allows proteolytic removal of the fused peptide from the expressed target protein.

Biotinylated Thrombin is similar to Restriction Grade Thrombin, but it has biotin covalently attached for easy removal of the enzyme from cleavage reactions using immobilized streptavidin. Both thrombin products are rigorously tested for specific cleavage of a recombinant fusion protein and are functionally free of contaminating protease activity. The Thrombin Cleavage Capture Kit contains Biotinylated Thrombin, Streptavidin Agarose and other reagents that enable cleavage of fusion proteins followed by convenient, quantitative removal of thrombin.

Biotinylated Thrombin and Restriction Grade Thrombin are supplied ready for use in a stabilized storage buffer and are prepared from plasma that tested negative for HBsAg and HIV antibodies. A Dilution/Storage Buffer and 10X reaction buffer are included in the kits. For convenience, one thrombin unit is defined as the amount of enzyme required to cleave 1 mg of a test protein when incubated in standard digest buffer at 20°C for 16 hours. Each vial contains 50 units of human thrombin at a concentration of approximately 1.0 units/μl (may vary from 0.5–1.5 units/μl; refer to the Certificate of Analysis for the exact concentration of a particular lot). A Cleavage Control Protein is also included for conducting control digests in parallel with experimental samples, or to test cleavage under customized buffer conditions.

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Components

Each kit contains enough components to treat up to approximately 50 mg recombinant protein.

Thrombin Cleavage Capture Kit

- 50 U Biotinylated Thrombin (approx. 1 U/μl in 50 mM sodium citrate, 200 mM NaCl, 0.1% PEG-8000, 50% glycerol, pH 6.5)
- 2 ml Thrombin Dilution/Storage Buffer (50 mM sodium citrate, 200 mM NaCl, 0.1% PEG-8000, 50% glycerol, pH 6.5)
- 5 ml 10X Thrombin Cleavage Buffer (200 mM Tris-HCl, 1.5 M NaCl, 25 mM CaCl₂, pH 8.4)
- 2 × 0.4 ml Streptavidin Agarose (50% slurry in phosphate buffer, 0.02% sodium azide, pH 7.5)
- 10 μg Cleavage Control Protein (in 20 mM Tris-HCl, 200 mM NaCl, 20 mM EDTA, 50% glycerol, pH 7.5)
- 10 Spin Filters, 2-ml capacity

Biotinylated Thrombin and Restriction Grade Thrombin Kits

- 50 U Biotinylated Thrombin (approx. 1 U/μl in 50 mM sodium citrate, 200 mM NaCl, 0.1% PEG-8000, 50% glycerol, pH 6.5)
- or
- 50 U Restriction Grade Thrombin (approx. 1 U/μl in 50 mM sodium citrate, 200 mM NaCl, 0.1% PEG-8000, 50% glycerol, pH 6.5)
- 2 ml Thrombin Dilution/Storage Buffer (50 mM sodium citrate, 200 mM NaCl, 0.1% PEG-8000, 50% glycerol, pH 6.5)
- 1 ml 10X Thrombin Cleavage Buffer (200 mM Tris-HCl, 1.5 M NaCl, 25 mM CaCl₂, pH 8.4)
- 10 μg Cleavage Control Protein (in 20 mM Tris-HCl, 200 mM NaCl, 20 mM EDTA, 50% glycerol, pH 7.5)

Storage

Store Biotinylated Thrombin, Restriction Grade Thrombin, Dilution/Storage Buffer, 10X Thrombin Cleavage Buffer, and Cleavage Control Protein at -20°C. Store Streptavidin Agarose and Spin Filters at 4°C. *Do not freeze Streptavidin Agarose!*

Thrombin Cleavage

Thrombin is a site-specific protease that exhibits very low non-specific cleavage under many conditions. A 1:2000 wt:wt ratio of thrombin to target protein (equivalent to one unit per milligram of target protein) is generally sufficient for cleavage in 1X Thrombin Cleavage/Capture Buffer at 20°C for 16 h. However, because each target protein presents the cleavage site somewhat differently, it is recommended to test several thrombin concentrations, temperatures and/or incubation times to optimize specificity and efficiency of cleavage. Note that excess thrombin may result in unwanted proteolysis at secondary sites. Incubation temperatures ranging from 4°C to 37°C can be used, although we recommend 20°C as the starting point for most proteins. Testing can be carried out in small scale reactions, which can be scaled up proportionately when optimal conditions are found.

Avoid the presence of serine protease inhibitors during cleavage (for example, thrombin is effectively inhibited by 1 mM PMSF). When thrombin cleavage of immobilized protein is desired, higher amounts of thrombin may be required than for solution-based reactions.

Small scale optimization

For small scale digestions thrombin is first diluted in Thrombin Dilution/Storage Buffer. The dilutions can be stored in this buffer at –20°C for several weeks; however, to avoid loss of activity we do not recommend extended storage of dilutions. The following protocol is an example of a simple optimization experiment designed to estimate the appropriate range of enzyme:target protein.

1. Make 1:25, 1:50, 1:100 and 1:200 serial dilutions of thrombin in Thrombin Dilution/Storage Buffer. The dilutions will contain approximately 0.04, 0.02, 0.01, and 0.005 U enzyme per μl .
2. Assemble the following components in a series of 5 labeled tubes.

5 μl	10X Thrombin Cleavage/Capture Buffer
10 μg	target protein
1 μl	Diluted Thrombin (each tube receives 1 μl of a different enzyme dilution. The fifth tube receives 1 μl Dilution/Storage Buffer only as a negative control)
x μl	deionized water
50 μl	total volume
3. Incubate the reactions at room temperature (20–21°C), removing 10 μl samples and combining with 10 μl 2X SDS sample buffer after 2, 4, 8 and 16 h.
4. Determine the extent of cleavage of the samples by SDS-PAGE analysis.

Scale-up

When a satisfactory condition is found, scale up the reaction proportionately. Note that if the reaction volume is kept in proportion from the above small scale example, a relatively large volume (5 ml) would be used for a 1 mg digestion. If desired, another preliminary experiment can be performed in which the reaction volume is varied while keeping the enzyme:target protein ratio and incubation conditions constant, which will determine appropriate adjustments needed for higher concentrations of enzyme and target protein.

Factors that affect thrombin activity

Many variables can be introduced into the cleavage reaction, depending on the buffer used with the target protein and other conditions. To test the effect of a given component or buffer, pilot digests can be performed with the target protein or Cleavage Control Protein supplied in the kit. We have analyzed the effect of a number of conditions and components commonly used with recombinant proteins on thrombin activity. The following table shows the relative amount of Biotinylated Thrombin needed to achieve > 95% cleavage of the Cleavage Control Protein under various conditions.

Condition or Component	Biotinylated Thrombin (for > 95% cleavage*)
1X Thrombin Cleavage Buffer	1
4 °C	2
37 °C	1
without CaCl ₂	1
10 mM βME	1
10 mM DTT	3
1 mM glutathione	1
1% Triton [®] X-100	1
1% Tween [®] -20	1
1% NP-40	1
10 μM heparin	< 1 [‡]
10 mM EDTA	1
1X His•Bind [®] Bind Buffer	1
1X His•Bind Wash Buffer	3
1X His•Bind Elute Buffer	4
0.5 M NaCl	2
1.0 M NaCl	2
20 mM MES pH 5.0	2
20 mM MES, pH 6.0	2
1X PBS pH 7.5	1
1X PBS pH 8.4	1

* 1 = > 95% cleavage with 1X enzyme,
2 = up to 2X more enzyme required
3 = 2–5X more enzyme required
4 = > 5X more enzyme required.

‡ Addition of heparin can enhance activity;
the amount of thrombin is reduced by up to
50%.

βME = β-mercaptoethanol,
DTT = dithiothreitol,
PBS = phosphate buffered saline

To enhance cleavage of some recombinant proteins, it is possible to carry out thrombin digestion in the presence of protein denaturants, which may expose the cleavage site to the enzyme more effectively and/or keep proteins in solution. The following table shows the effect of several urea concentrations and 0.01% SDS on thrombin activity after 2 h and 16 h incubation at 20°C.

Thrombin Activity Remaining After Incubation

	after 2 hours	after 16 hours
cleavage buffer	100%	95–100%
cleavage buffer + 1 M urea	100%	93%
cleavage buffer + 2 M urea	100%	73%
cleavage buffer + 3 M urea	69%	45%
cleavage buffer + 0.01% SDS	71%	not determined

Monitoring cleavage

Cleavage can be easily monitored by including a parallel reaction using the supplied Cleavage Control Protein in the same buffer system as the target protein. The Cleavage Control Protein is converted from a single 48 kDa band to two bands of 35 kDa and 13 kDa following thrombin cleavage. Inclusion of a control digest enables confirmation of enzyme activity and cleavage specificity, which is especially important when cleavage conditions have been modified. Whereas sufficient control protein is provided to allow Coomassie detection of cleavage products, smaller scale reactions (< 0.5 µg) can be monitored by Western blotting. The Cleavage Control Protein has an S•Tag™ peptide on the amino-terminal side of the thrombin recognition sequence. The 35 kDa cleavage product can be detected using either S-protein AP Conjugate or S-protein HRP Conjugate (Cat. no. 69598-3 and 69047-3, respectively). High sensitivity chemiluminescent detection of S•Tag fusion proteins can be performed using the S•Tag AP or HRP LumiBlot™ Kits (Cat. no. 69099-3 and 69058-3, respectively). Also included in the S•Tag LumiBlot Kits is a convenient set of Perfect Protein™ Western Blot Markers to confirm the molecular weight of cleavage reaction products.

Thrombin cleavage can also be monitored by testing for the removal of peptides from fusion proteins upstream of the cleavage site. For example, S•Tag fusion proteins can be blotted with and without thrombin treatment and detected with any of the S•Tag Western Blot Kits. Successful cleavage results in removal of the S•Tag peptide and no band will be evident at the size corresponding to the target protein. A similar strategy can be used with other fusion tags that may be cleaved from fusion proteins and for which a detection reagent is available.

Biotinylated Thrombin Capture

After the cleavage reaction, Biotinylated Thrombin can be quantitatively removed with Streptavidin Agarose (supplied in the Thrombin Cleavage/Capture Kit) using a ratio of 16 µl settled resin (32 µl of 50% slurry) per unit of enzyme. Following the proteolytic digestion of the target protein, Biotinylated Thrombin is bound batchwise to Streptavidin Agarose and the target protein recovered by spin-filtration. In 1X Thrombin Cleavage buffer, > 99% of the enzymatic activity is captured by Streptavidin Agarose in a 30 min incubation. Streptavidin Agarose is supplied as a 50% slurry that can be added directly to the cleavage reaction.

Caution: *Streptavidin Agarose is stored in a buffer containing 0.02% sodium azide and should be handled with caution. Wear gloves and appropriate laboratory clothing.*

1. Ensure that the Streptavidin Agarose beads are evenly suspended by gently mixing by inversion before removing an aliquot.
2. Transfer the desired amount of agarose to the reaction. Use a wide-bore pipet tip. We recommend using a minimum of 25 µl Streptavidin Agarose slurry because smaller resin volumes are difficult to manipulate.
3. Incubate at room temperature for 30 min with gentle mixing.
4. Transfer the entire reaction to the sample cup of a Spin Filter. Multiple spin filters may be used if needed.
5. Centrifuge at 500 × g for 5 minutes. The filtrate in the collection tube contains the cleaved protein, free of Biotinylated Thrombin.

References

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