MACHEREY-NAGEL Chromatography application note



MN application note 05/2020

Solid phase extraction of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) from drinking water

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Abstract

This application note describes the determination of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) from drinking water. It demonstrates the extraction of PFAS from drinking water samples using CHROMABOND[®] PFAS column, a special SPE combination phase, for the methodology described in EPA 537.1, 533 and DIN 38407-42. The eluates are finally analyzed by HPLC-MS/MS.

Introduction

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are a group of persistent and bioaccumulative anthropogenic pollutants characterized by a linear aliphatic backbone, a high degree of fluorination and often feature a carboxylic or sulfonic acid functionality. PFAS are common to consumer and industrial processes around the globe. They are introduced to the environment through a variety of sources such as food contact materials, manufacturing or industrial applications. Because of the accumulation of PFAS in water, soil and living organisms and the well-known health risks associated with PFAS exposure it is important to ensure proper worldwide monitoring of these chemicals.

Authorities of various countries published several methods, such as US EPA, ASTM, DIN and other standard methods for PFAS [1, 2, 3]. Further regulations are expected to be enacted.

This work presents a method for the simultaneous analysis of 32 PFAS from drinking water including a solid phase extraction method. It combines successful types of retention mechanisms of several directives like EPA method 537.1, EPA 533 and DIN 38407-42 method to ensure the best enrichment of PFAS from water samples using a multi-layer SPE column. The extracts are finally analyzed by HPLC-MS/MS.



Figure 1: General structure of various per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS)

Sample pretreatment for solid phase extraction (SPE)

- Control pH of water sample (it should be between 6 and 8)
- Add 25 μ L organic standard solution* (β = 20 ng/mL in methanol for each compound) to 150 mL water sample
 - * Contains native and isotopically labeled per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances.

Solid phase extraction

Column:	CHROMABOND [®] PFAS, 6 mL, 300 mg, (REF 730283)
Conditioning:	10 mL 0.1 $\%$ NH_3 in methanol, 10 mL methanol, 10 mL water
Sample application:	150 mL water sample with a flow rate of 5 mL/min
Washing:	5 mL of 25 mM ammonium acetate buffer (pH 4.0) water with a flow rate of 3 mL/min
Drying:	1 min with vacuum
Elution:	10 mL 0.1 % NH_3 in methanol
Eluent exchange:	Evaporate eluate to dryness at 40 °C under a stream of nitrogen and dissolve residue in 0.5 mL water / methanol (40:60, v/v)

Subsequent analysis: HPLC-MS/MS

Chromatographic conditions:

Column:	EC NUCLEOS	SHELL [®] RP 18plus,			
	100 x 2.0 mm	, 2.7 μm (REF 7632	34.20)		
Eluent A:	5 mM ammor	nium acetate in wate	r		
Eluent B:	5 mM ammor	nium acetate in meth	nanol		
Gradient:	hold 40 % B f to 95 % B, ho to 40 % B, ho	or 1.0 min, in 8 min ld 95 % B for 3.0 mi ld 5 % B for 2.9 min	from 40 % E in, in 0.1 mir		
Flow rate:	0.3 mL/min				
Injection volume:	5 µL				
Temperature:	40 °C				
MS conditions:					
AB Sciex QTRAP 5500					
Acquisition mode:	SRM	lon spray voltage:	– 4500 V		
Interface:	ESI	Temperature:	400 °C		
Polarity:	negative	lon source gas 1:	50 psig		
Curtain gas:	30 psig	lon source gas 2:	60 psig		
Collision Gas:	medium	Detection window:	60 s		

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SPE of PFAS from drinking water

MRM transitions								
Abbreviation	Compound	Q ₁	Q₃ (quan)	Q ₃ (qual)	RT (min)			
MPFBA	Perfluoro-n-[¹³ C ₄]butanoic acid	216.9	171.9	95.7	1.32			
PFBA	Perfluoro-n-butanoic acid	212.9	168.8	88.9	1.33			
PF ₄ OPeA	Perfluoro-4-oxapentanoic acid	228.9	84.9	197.0	1.67			
PFPeA	Perfluoro-n-pentanoic acid	262.9	219.0	68.7	2.63			
L-PFBS	Perfluoro-1-butanesulfonate	298.9	79.9	98.9	2.94			
PF₅OHxA	Perfluoro-5-oxahexanoic acid	279.1	85.0	229.0	3.11			
PFEESA	Perfluoro(2-ethoxyethane)sulfonate	315.0	135.0	69.1	3.56			
3,6-OPFHpA	Perfluoro-3,6-dioxaheptanoic acid	201.0	85.0	134.9	3.88			
4:2FTS	1H, 1H, 2H, 2H-perfluoro-1-hexanesulfonate	326.9	306.9	81.0	3.94			
MPFHxA	Perfluoro-n-[1,2-13C2]hexanoic acid	314.9	269.8	119.5	4.08			
PFHxA	Perfluoro-n-hexanoic acid	312.9	268.8	119.0	4.09			
L-PFPeS	Perfluoro-1-pentanesulfonate	348.9	79.9	98.9	4.4			
HFPO-DA	2,3,3,3-Tetrafluoro-2-(1,1,2,2,3,3,3-heptafluoropropoxy)-propanoic acid	328.9	284.8	169.0	4.47			
M ₃ HFPO-DA	2,3,3,3-Tetrafluoro-2-(1,1,2,2,3,3,3-heptafluoropropoxy)- ¹³ C ₃ -propanoic acid	331.9	286.6	169.0	4.47			
PFHpA	Perfluoro-n-heptanoic acid	362.9	318.7	169.0	5.15			
MPFHxS	Perfluoro-1-hexane[1802]sulfonate	402.9	103.0	83.9	5.21			
PFHxSK	Perfluoro-1-hexanesulfonate	398.9	79.8	98.9	5.22			
NaDONA	Sodium dodecafluoro-3H-4,8-dioxanonanoate	376.9	250.7	85.0	5.29			
MPFOA	Perfluoro-n-[1,2,3,4-13C4]octanoic acid	417.0	371.8	169.1	5.91			
6:2FTS	1H, 1H, 2H, 2H-perfluoro-1-octanesulfonate	426.9	406.9	79.9	5.91			
M ₂ PFOA	Perfluoro-n-[1,2- ¹³ C ₂]octanoic acid	415.0	369.8	169.4	5.96			
PFOA	Perfluoro-n-octanoic acid	412.9	369.0	169.0	5.97			
L-PFHpS	Perfluoro-1-heptanesulfonate	448.9	79.8	98.9	5.98			
PFOSK	Perfluorooctanesulfonate	498.8	79.9	99.0	6.61			
MPFOS	Perfluoro-n-[1,2,3,4-13C4]octanesulfonate	502.9	98.9	79.9	6.61			
PFNA	Perfluoro-n-nonanoic acid	462.9	418.9	169.0	6.62			
MPFNA	Perfluoro-n-[1,2,3,4,5– ¹³ C ₅]nonanoic acid	468.0	422.8	169.0	6.62			
9CI-PF3ONS	9-chlorohexadecafluoro-3-oxanonane-1-sulfonate	530.8	350.7	82.8	6.96			
L-PFNS	Perfluoro-1-nonanesulfonate	548.8	79.9	98.8	7.15			
8:2FTS	1H, 1H, 2H, 2H-perfluoro-1-decanesulfonate	526.8	506.8	81.0	7.16			
PFDA	Perfluoro-n-decanoic acid	512.8	468.9	219.1	7.18			
MPFDA	Perfluoro-n-[1,2-13C2]decanoic acid	514.8	469.7	219.1	7.18			
d ₃ -N-MeFOSAA	N-methyl-d3-perfluoro-1-octanesulfonamidoacetic acid	572.9	419.0	169.0	7.42			
N-MeFOSAA	N-methylperfluoro-1-octanesulfonamidoacetic acid	569.8	418.9	168.9	7.43			
L-PFDS	Perfluoro-1-decanesulfonate	598.8	79.9	98.9	7.6			
FOSA	Perfluoro-1-octanesulfonamide	497.9	77.8	63.9	7.65			
PFUdA	Perfluoro-n-undecanoic acid	562.8	518.9	169.1	7.65			
MPFUdA	Perfluoro- <i>n</i> -[1,2 ⁻¹³ C ₂]undecanoic acid	564.8	519.9	169.1	7.65			
d5-N-EtFOSAA	N-ethyl-d5-perfluoro-1-octanesulfonamidoacetic acid	588.8	418.8	169.0	7.66			
N-EtFOSAA	N-ethylperfluoro-1-octanesulfonamidoacetic acid	583.8	418.8	168.9	7.67			
11CI-PF ₃ OUdS	11-chloroeicosafluoro-3-oxaundecane-1-sulfonate	630.7	451.0	82.8	7.87			
PFDoA	Perfluoro-n-dodecanoic acid	612.8	568.9	169.0	8.06			
MPFDoA	Perfluoro-n-[1,2-13C2]dodecanoic acid	614.9	569.8	168.9	8.06			
10:2FTS	1H, 1H, 2H, 2H-perfluoro-1-dodecanesulfonate	626.9	606.9	81.0	8.07			
PFTrDA	Perfluoro-n-tridecanoic acid	662.8	618.9	169.0	8.41			
PFTeDA	Perfluoro-n-tetradecanoic acid	712.8	668.8	168.9	8.72			

Table 1: MRM transitions and retention times of PFAS.

SPE of PFAS from drinking water



Figure 2: Chromatogram of PFAS on NUCLEOSHELL[®] RP 18plus column (β = 1 ng/mL for each compound).

Calibration and Recovery rates

Compound	%Recovery	% RSD	R ₂	Compound	%Recovery	% RSD	R ₂
3–6-OPFHpA	86.6%	2.6 %	1.000	L-PFDS	89.6 %	3.8%	0.996
M ₂ PFOA	89.5 %	3.0 %	0.999	L-PFHpS	89.0 %	1.6%	0.999
MPFBA	85.7 %	1.4 %	1.000	L-PFNS	84.7 %	3.3 %	0.999
MPFDA	89.5 %	0.7 %	0.999	MPFHxS	89.0%	3.0 %	1.000
MPFDoA	80.5 %	1.7 %	0.998	MPFOS	87.0%	2.5%	0.999
MPFHxA	88.8 %	4.7 %	0.999	PFEESA	87.6%	2.1 %	1.000
MPFNA	88.8 %	2.0 %	0.999	PFHxSK	88.5 %	1.4 %	0.999
MPFOA	90.2 %	3.0 %	1.000	PFOSK	86.4 %	2.3%	0.999
MPFUdA	84.1 %	3.5 %	0.999	10:2FTS	80.8 %	3.8%	0.997
PF ₄ OPeA	86.4%	0.6 %	0.999	4:2FTS	87.2 %	2.3%	0.999
PF₅OHxA	89.5 %	3.2 %	0.999	6:2FTS	92.2 %	10.3 %	0.998
PFBA	81.1 %	1.8%	0.994	8:2FTS	92.7 %	4.4 %	1.000
PFDA	90.9%	1.7 %	1.000	d ₃ -N-MeFOSAA	82.1 %	9.9%	0.999
PFDoA	79.1 %	1.4 %	0.998	d5-N-EtFOSAA	83.9 %	2.8%	0.993
PFHpA	89.1 %	1.0 %	0.999	N-EtFOSAA	85.2 %	4.8%	0.995
PFHxA	86.0 %	0.3 %	0.999	N-MeFOSAA	87.3 %	3.2 %	0.999
PFNA	89.9 %	3.5 %	0.999	FOSA	42.0 %	1.9%	0.999
PFOA	89.3 %	3.7 %	0.999	NaDONA	86.7 %	1.8%	1.000
PFPeA	88.4 %	2.4 %	1.000	11CI-PF ₃ OUdS	84.3 %	0.5 %	0.999
PFTeDA	72.1 %	4.4 %	0.997	9CI-PF ₃ ONS	89.9 %	4.4 %	0.999
PFTrDA	77.4 %	2.7 %	0.999	HFPO-DA	89.1 %	3.2 %	0.999
PFUdA	85.7 %	3.8%	1.000	M₃HFPO-DA	92.1 %	2.6 %	0.996
L-PFBS	89.2 %	2.8%	0.999				

Table 2: Recovery rates for presented SPE method for drinking water. Correlation coefficient is given for all compound from calibration curves, determined of 5 levels between 0.1 ng/mL and 1.0 ng/mL for each compound.

SPE of PFAS from drinking water



Figure 3: Recovery rates of PFAS from a water sample (spiked with 0.5 ng for each compound in 0.15 L water).

Conclusion

This application note shows the reliable and successful determination of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) from drinking water with an optimized SPE method. By using CHROMABOND[®] PFAS it was possible to achieve high recovery rates for PFAS from drinking water with good reproducibility. By the combination of different SPE sorbents in a multi-layer column it is possible to use various interaction types like ionic, hydrophobic, hydrogen bonds and dipole-dipole interactions for the enrichment of a broad spectrum of PFAS. In this way, a SPE method could be developed with the strength of several directives EPA 537.1, EPA 533 and DIN 38407-42.

Most of the PFAS show recovery rates between 80% to 100%. Regarding the different types of perfluoroalkyl substances, the perfluorooctanesulfonamide (FOSA) and three perfluoroalkylcarboxylic acids with long carbon chain (PFTrDA, PFTeDA, PFDoA) show lower recovery rates. This result depends on the high polarity and less ionic interaction of FOSA with the SPE sorbent. Lower recovery for PFTrDA, PFTeDA and PFDoA can probably be explained by solubility problems and adsorption effects on surface materials.

The chromatographic separation of PFAS was performed by using core-shell particles that are well known for fast and high-efficient separations combined with a reasonably low back pressure. In this work, a subsequent analysis was developed on a NUCLEOSHELL[®] RP 18plus column as shown in figure 2. The chromatographic results provide a good correlation for all PFAS compounds as presented in table 2.

In summary, the presented application describes a quick and convenient method for the determination of various PFAS from water samples with a SPE procedure using the extraction mechanisms of DIN 30407-42 and EPA Methods 537.1 and 533.

References

- Method 537.1: Determination of Selected Per- and Polyfluorinated Alkyl Substances in Drinking Water by Solid Phase Extraction and Liquid Chromatography/Tandem Mass Spectrometry (LC/MS/MS). U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Research and Development, National Center for Environmental Assessment, Washington, DC, 2018.
- [2] German standard methods for the examination of water, waste water and sludge - Jointly determinable substances (group F) -Part 42: Determination of selected polyfluorinated compounds (PFC) in water - Method using high performance liquid chromatography and mass spectrometric detection (HPLC/MS-MS) after solid-liquid extraction (F 42), 2011–03.
- [3] Method 533: Determination of Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances in Drinking Water by Isotope Dilution Anion Exchange Solid Phase Extraction and Liquid Chromatography/Tandem Mass Spectrometry. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Research and Development, National Center for Environmental Assessment, Washington, DC, 2019.

Product information

The following MACHEREY-NAGEL products have been used in this application note:

- REF 763234.20 EC HPLC column (analytical), NUCLEOSHELL® RP 18plus, 2.7 $\mu m,$ 100 x 2 mm
- REF 730283 CHROMABOND[®] PFAS, 6 mL, 300 mg

REF 702402 Screw closure, N 9. PP, blue, c. hole, Sili. w./Polyimide orange, 1.0 mm, fluorine-free

REF 702009 Screw neck vial, N 9, 11.6 x 32.0 mm, 0.3 mL, inner cone, PP transparent

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