

The Theory and Practice of Industrial Pharmacy

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Contents

Section I. Principles of Pharmaceutical Processing

1. Mixing 3
EDWARD G. RIPPIE
2. Milling 21
EUGENE L. PARROT
3. Drying 47
ALBERT S. RANKELL, HERBERT A. LIEBERMAN, ROBERT F. SCHIFFMANN
4. Compression and Consolidation of Powdered Solids 66
KEITH MARSHALL
5. Basic Chemical Principles Related to Emulsion and Suspension Dosage Forms 100
STANLEY L. HEM, JOSEPH R. FELDKAMP, JOE L. WHITE
6. Pharmaceutical Rheology 123
JOHN H. WOOD
7. Clarification and Filtration 146
S. CHRAI

Section II. Pharmaceutical Dosage Form Design

8. Preformulation 171
EUGENE F. FIESE, TIMOTHY A. HAGEN
9. Biopharmaceutics 197
K.C. KWAN, M.R. DOBRINSKA, J.D. ROGERS, A.E. TILL, K.C. YEH
10. Statistical Applications in the Pharmaceutical Sciences 243
SANFORD BOLTON

Section III. Pharmaceutical Dosage Forms

11. Tablets 293
GILBERT S. BANKER, NEIL R. ANDERSON
12. Tablet Coating 346
JAMES A. SEITZ, SHASHI P. MEHTA, JAMES L. YEAGER

- 13. Capsules 374
 - Part One Hard Capsules 374
VAN B. HOSTETLER
 - Part Two Soft Gelatin Capsules 398
J.P. STANLEY
 - Part Three Microencapsulation 412
J.A. BAKAN
- 14. Sustained Release Dosage Forms 430
NICHOLAS G. LORDI
- 15. Liquids 457
J.C. BOYLAN
- 16. Pharmaceutical Suspensions 479
NAGIN K. PATEL, LLOYD KENNON*, R. SAUL LEVINSON
- 17. Emulsions 502
MARTIN M. RIEGER
- 18. Semisolids 534
BERNARD IDSON, JACK LAZARUS*
- 19. Suppositories 564
LARRY J. COBEN, HERBERT A. LIEBERMAN
- 20. Pharmaceutical Aerosols 589
JOHN J. SCIARRA, ANTHONY J. CUTIE
- 21. Sterilization 619
KENNETH E. AVIS, MICHAEL J. AKERS
- 22. Sterile Products 639
KENNETH E. AVIS

Section IV. Product Processing, Packaging, Evaluation, and Regulations

- 23. Pilot Plant Scale-Up Techniques 681
SAMUEL HARDER, GLENN VAN BUSKIRK
 - 24. Packaging Materials Science 711
CARLO P. CROCE, ARTHUR FISCHER, RALPH H. THOMAS
 - 25. Production Management 733
J.V. BATTISTA
 - 26. Kinetic Principles and Stability Testing 760
LEON LACHMAN, PATRICK DELUCA, MICHAEL J. AKERS
 - 27. Quality Control and Assurance 804
LEON LACHMAN, SAMIR A. HANNA, KARL LIN
 - 28. Drug Regulatory Affairs 856
WILLIAM R. PENDERGAST, RAYMOND D. MCMURRAY*
- INDEX 883

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Drying

ALBERT S. RANKELL, HERBERT A. LIEBERMAN,
and ROBERT F. SCHIFFMANN

There is hardly a pharmaceutical plant engaged in the manufacture of tablets or capsules that does not contain dryers. Unfortunately, the operation of drying is so taken for granted that efforts for achieving increased efficiency in the production of tablets do not include a study of drying. This chapter introduces the industrial pharmacist to the theory and fundamental concepts of drying.

Definition. For the purpose of this discussion, drying is defined as the removal of a liquid from a material by the application of heat, and is accomplished by the transfer of a liquid from a surface into an unsaturated vapor phase. This definition applies to the removal of a small amount of water from moisture-bearing table salt as well as to the recovery of salt from the sea by evaporation. Drying and evaporation are distinguishable merely by the relative quantities of liquid removed from the solid.

There are, however, many nonthermal methods of drying, for example, the *expression* of a solid to remove liquid (the squeezing of a wetted sponge), the *extraction* of liquid from a solid by use of a solvent, the *adsorption* of water from a solvent by the use of desiccants (such as anhydrous calcium chloride), the *absorption* of moisture from gases by passage through a sulfuric acid column, and the *desiccation* of moisture from a solid by placing it in a sealed container with a moisture-removing material (silica gel in a bottle).

Purpose. Drying is most commonly used in pharmaceutical manufacturing as a unit process in the preparation of granules, which can be dispensed in bulk or converted into tablets or capsules. Another application is found in the processing of materials, e.g., the preparation of dried aluminum hydroxide, the spray drying of lactose, and the preparation of powdered extracts. Drying also can be used to reduce bulk and

weight, thereby lowering the cost of transportation and storage. Other uses include aiding in the preservation of animal and vegetable drugs by minimizing mold and bacterial growth in moisture-laden material and facilitating comminution by making the dried substance far more friable than the original, water-containing drug.

Dried products often are more stable than moist ones, as is the case in such diverse substances as effervescent salts, aspirin, hygroscopic powders, ascorbic acid, and penicillin. The drying reduces the chemical reactivity of the remaining water, which is expressed as a reduction in the water activity of the product. Various processes for the removal of moisture are used in the production of these materials. After the moisture is removed, the product is maintained at low water levels by the use of desiccants and/or low moisture transmission packaging materials. The proper application of drying techniques and moisture-protective packaging requires a knowledge of the theory of drying, with particular reference to the concept of equilibrium moisture content.

Psychrometry

A critical factor in drying operations is the vapor-carrying capacity of the air, nitrogen, or other gas stream passing over the drying material. This carrying capacity determines not only the rate of drying but also the extent of drying, i.e., the lowest moisture content to which a given material can be dried. The determination of the vapor concentration and carrying capacity of the gas is termed *psychrometry*. The air-water vapor system is the system most commonly employed in pharmaceutical drying operations and is therefore included in this discussion.

The concentration of water vapor in a gas is

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