

20.4: Some Important Monosaccharides

Learning Objectives

- To identify the structures of D-glucose, D-galactose, and D-fructose and describe how they differ from each other.

Although a variety of monosaccharides are found in living organisms, three hexoses are particularly abundant: D-glucose, D-galactose, and D-fructose (Figure 20.4.1). Glucose and galactose are both aldohexoses, while fructose is a ketohexose.

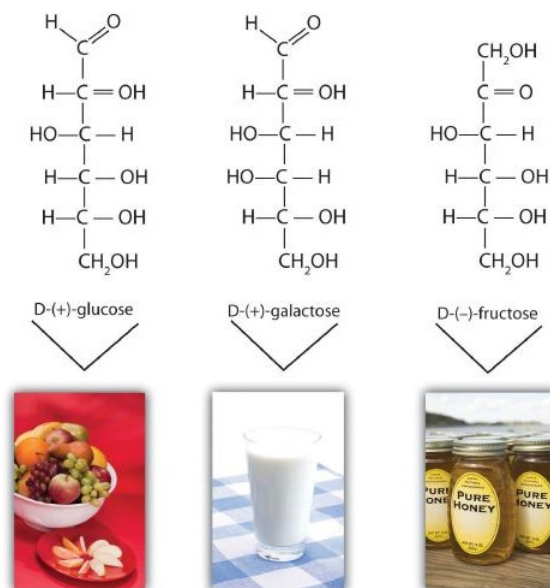


Figure 20.4.1: Structures of Three Important Hexoses. Each hexose is pictured with a food source in which it is commonly found.
Source: Photos © Thinkstock.

Glucose

D-Glucose, generally referred to as simply glucose, is the most abundant sugar found in nature; most of the carbohydrates we eat are eventually converted to it in a series of biochemical reactions that produce energy for our cells. It is also known by three other names: *dextrose*, from the fact that it rotates plane-polarized light in a clockwise (dextrorotatory) direction; *corn sugar* because in the United States cornstarch is used in the commercial process that produces glucose from the hydrolysis of starch; and *blood sugar* because it is the carbohydrate found in the circulatory system of animals. Normal blood sugar values range from 70 to 105 mg glucose/dL plasma, and normal urine may contain anywhere from a trace to 20 mg glucose/dL urine.

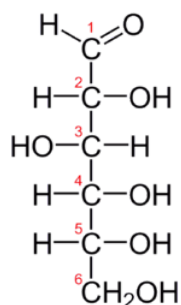


Figure 20.4.2: Fischer projection of D-glucose

The [Fischer projection](#) of D-glucose is given in Figure 20.4.2. Glucose is a D sugar because the OH group on the fifth carbon atom (the chiral center farthest from the carbonyl group) is on the right. In fact, all the OH groups except the one on the third carbon atom are to the right.

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