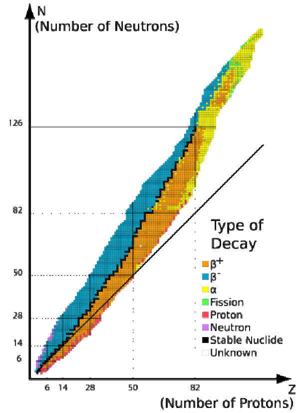
UiO : Department of Physics
University of Oslo

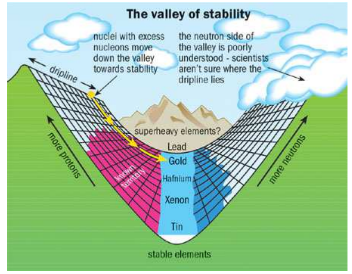
Oslo University Hospital

Radioactivity and dose in radioactive media

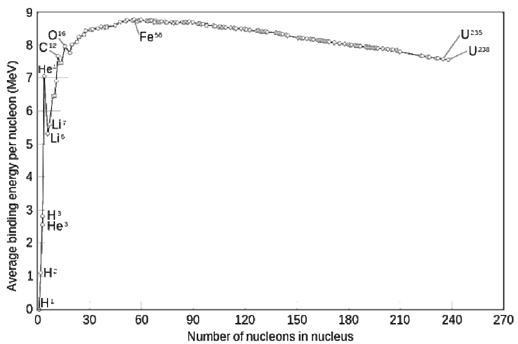
Eirik Malinen

The valley of stability





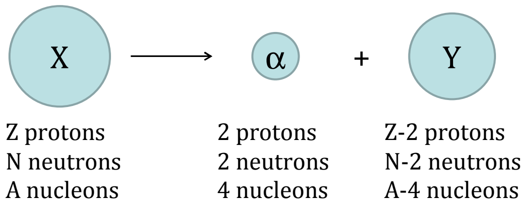
Nuclear binding energy



Radioactivity and radiation dose

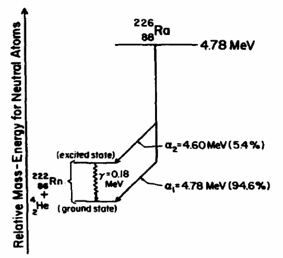
- About 255 stable nuclei
- Nuclides in nature: 340
- Decay modes in radioactive nuclei
  - β^- : neutron rich
  - β^- : neutron deficient
  - EC : neutron deficient near valley
  - α : heavy nuclei
  - Fission : very heavy nuclei

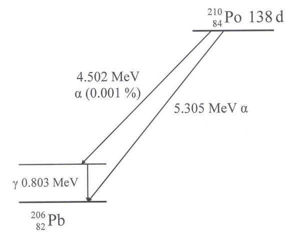
α-disintegration



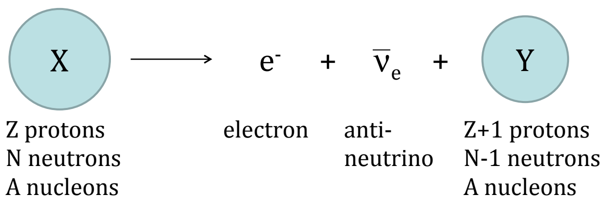
- α-particle typically have 2-7 MeV energy
- ~4 cm range in air; 50-80 μm in water
- Becomes He-atom after slowing down

α- decay scheme



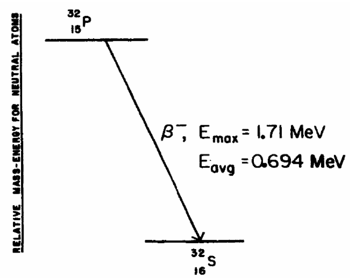


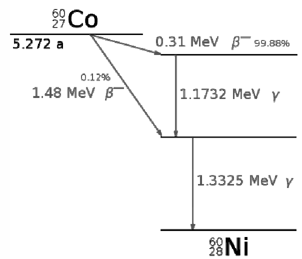
β^--disintegration



- Spectrum of electrons emitted: $T=[0, T_{\beta,max}]$
- Remember: $n \rightarrow p + e^- + \bar{\nu}_e$

β^--decay scheme





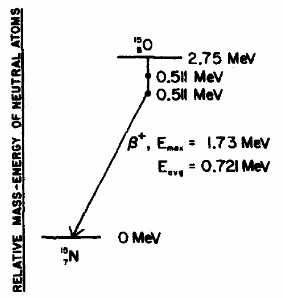
β^+-disintegration

X ⟶ e^+ + ν_e + Y

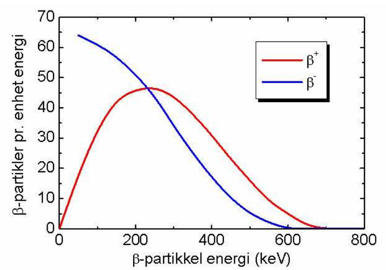
X		e^+	ν_e	Y
Z protons N neutrons A nucleons		positron	neutrino	Z-1 protons N+1 neutrons A nucleons

- Spectrum of positrons emitted
- Here: p +1.022 MeV $\rightarrow$ n + e^+ + ν_e

β^+-decay scheme



β^-/β^+ decay spectrum



- β^- spectrum shifted due to electrostatic attraction with nucleus
- Rule of thumb: $\overline{T} = 1/3\ T_{max}$

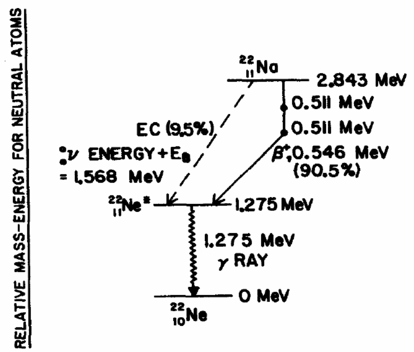
Disintegration by electron capture

X + e^- ⟶ ν_e + Y

X	e^-		ν_e	Y
Z protons N neutrons A nucleons	electron		neutrino	Z-1 protons N+1 neutrons A nucleons

- Same daughter nuclei as β^+ disintegration

EC / β^+-decay scheme

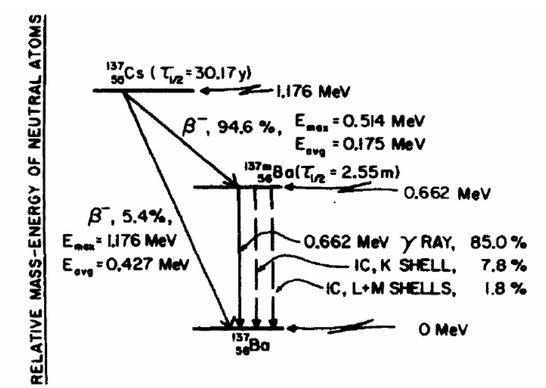


Internal conversion

- γ-ray emission with energy hν often accompanies decay
- Alternative: impart kinetic energy to atomic electron
- Energy: $T = h\nu - E_b$

UiO : Department of Physics
University of Oslo
Oslo University Hospital

Internal conversion cont'd



UiO : Department of Physics
University of Oslo
Oslo University Hospital

Radioactivity and radiation dose

- Radioactivity important in
  - Radiation protection – external and internal exposure
  - Brachytherapy
  - Nuclear medicine – PET / SPECT, Radionuclide / Radioimmunotherapy

UiO : Department of Physics
University of Oslo
Oslo University Hospital

Radioactivity

- Number of decay events *dN* occurring during *dt* is proportional to number of atoms N:

$$\frac{dN}{dt} \propto -N$$

- Decay constant λ introduced:

$$\frac{dN}{dt} = -\lambda N$$

- Simple differential equation with solution:

$$N = N_0 e^{-\lambda t}$$

Radioactivity

- λ is characteristic of each nuclide; decay probability per unit time per atom
- Rate of decay; activity is given by:

$$\left|\frac{dN}{dt}\right| = \left|\frac{d}{dt}\left(N_0 e^{-\lambda t}\right)\right| = \lambda N$$

- If nucleus has several modes of disintegration:

$$\lambda = \lambda_A + \lambda_B + \cdots = \sum_i \lambda_i$$

Radioactivity cont'd

- The total activity is then

$$\lambda N = N \sum_i \lambda_i$$

- Partial activity for i'th mode of disintegration:

$$\lambda_i N = \lambda_i N_0 e^{-\lambda t}$$

- Activity given in units of Becquerel [Bq] = s^{-1}
- Earlier: 1 Ci = 3.7×10^{10} Bq

Radioactivity cont'd

- Time needed to decay to 1/e of original number of nuclei:

$$\frac{N}{N_0} = \frac{1}{e} = e^{-\lambda\tau} \Rightarrow \tau = \frac{1}{\lambda}$$

- τ: mean life, average lifetime of a nucleus.
- Probability of nucleus not having decayed:

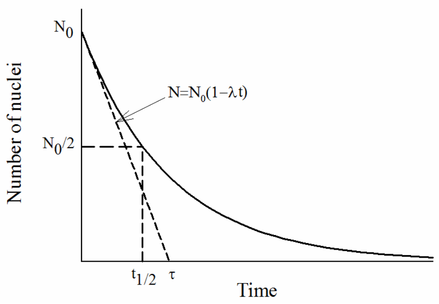
$$p(t) = C \exp^{-\lambda t} \Rightarrow \int_0^\infty p(t)dt \overset{!}{=} 1 \Rightarrow C = \frac{1}{\lambda}$$

- Mean lifetime: $\tau = \int_0^\infty t p(t) dt = \frac{1}{\lambda}\int_0^\infty t e^{-\lambda t} dt = \frac{1}{\lambda}$

Radioactivity cont'd

- Half life $t_{1/2}$ defined as

$$\frac{N}{N_0}=\frac{1}{2}=e^{-\lambda t_{1/2}} \Rightarrow t_{1/2}=\frac{\ln(2)}{\lambda}$$



Parent-daughter relationships

- Initial population of parent nuclei $N_{P,0}$
- Decays into a radioactive daughter by λ_P
- Daughter activity:

$$\frac{dN_D}{dt}=\lambda_P N_P-\lambda_D N_D=\lambda_P N_{P,0}e^{-\lambda t}-\lambda_D N_D$$

- It can be shown that:

$$N_D=N_{P,0}\frac{\lambda_P}{\lambda_D-\lambda_P}\left(e^{-\lambda_P t}-e^{-\lambda_D t}\right)$$

Parent-daughter relationships cont'd

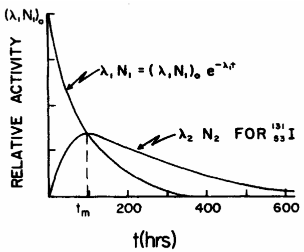
- Daughter will have zero activity at t=0 and t=∞. Maximum of N_D reached at:

$$\frac{dN_D}{dt}=0 \Rightarrow -\lambda_P e^{-\lambda_P t_m}+\lambda_D e^{-\lambda_D t_m}=0$$

$$\Rightarrow t_m=\frac{\ln(\lambda_D/\lambda_P)}{\lambda_D-\lambda_P}$$

$${}^{131m}_{52}Te \xrightarrow[\tau_{1/2}=30h]{\beta^-} {}^{131}_{53}I \xrightarrow[\tau_{1/2}=193h]{\beta^-} {}^{131}_{54}Xe$$

$\lambda_1 = 2.31 \times 10^{-2}\ h^{-1}$, $\lambda_2 = 3.59 \times 10^{-3}\ h^{-}$



Parent-daughter relationships cont'd

- Ratio of activities:

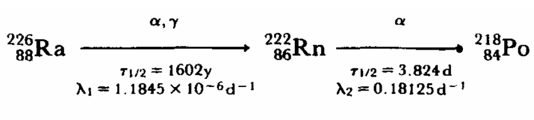
$$\frac{\lambda_D N_D}{\lambda_P N_P}=\frac{\lambda_D N_{P,0}\frac{\lambda_P}{\lambda_D-\lambda_P}\left(e^{-\lambda_P t}-e^{-\lambda_D t}\right)}{\lambda_P N_{P,0}e^{-\lambda_P t}}$$

$$=\frac{\lambda_D}{\lambda_D-\lambda_P}\left(1-e^{-(\lambda_D t-\lambda_P t)}\right)$$

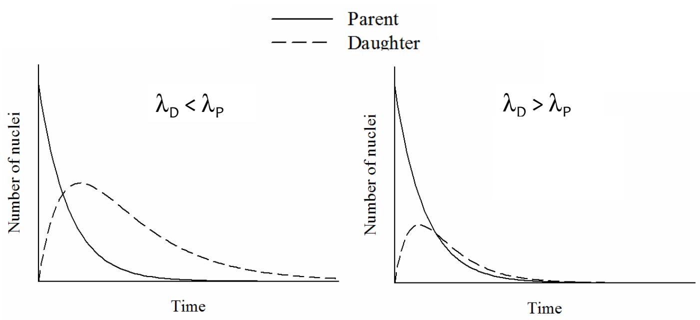
- For $\lambda_D < \lambda_P$, the ratio increases with time
- For $\lambda_D > \lambda_P$ at $t >> t_m$, the ratio is $\lambda_D/(\lambda_D-\lambda_P)$

Parent-daughter relationships cont'd

- For $\lambda_D >> \lambda_P$, the activity ratio is unity
- Example



Parent-daughter relationships cont'd



Absorbed dose in radioactive media

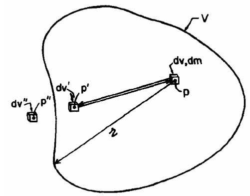
- Dose from α-particles: $D = n \times T$
- Dose from β's: $D \approx n \times \overline{T}$
- Dose from γ's; two limiting cases:

1. In a *small* radioactive object V, CPE is obtained at least a distance d=<t> from the boundary of V. The dose is given by KERMA.
2. In a large radioactive object (>> 1/μ), the dose will be given by the sum of the kinetic energies emitted.

Absorbed dose in radioactive media

- At intermediate radioactive objects, we use the absorbed fraction

$$AF = \frac{\gamma - \text{ray energy absorbed}}{\gamma - \text{ray energy emitted}} = \frac{\varepsilon_{dv,V}}{R_{dv,V}}$$



- Exponential attenuation over *r*

$$AF = \iint \left(1 - e^{-\mu r}\right) \sin\theta \, d\theta \, d\varphi$$

Absorbed fraction