

of illegal drugs such as cocaine, cannabis and LSD. Their biochemical mode of action is described with respect to their addictive nature; the symptoms of abuse and addiction are also described. The biochemical or bacterial resistance to drugs such as antibiotics, anti-cancer agents and pain relief is discussed. The body's vitamin requirements and the use of vitamin supplements and the use of organophosphates in head lice lotion and sheep dip are also discussed.

The book reviews many aspects of modern medicine in an approachable manner for the non-scientific reader. It would also be a good reference source for those beginning to pursue a drug-related subject.

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Introduction to Soft Matter: Polymers, Colloids, Amphiphiles and Liquid Crystals

I.W. Hamley; Wiley, Chichester, 2000, 342 pages, ISBN 0-471-89951-8 (£65.00)

Technological exploitation of matter has progressed throughout successive millennia: following iron and steel in the nineteenth century, in the twentieth century engineered materials such as polymers and plastics took over many of the roles of traditional 'hard' (based on macroscopic mechanical properties) materials. Though the properties of hard matter are well understood, the learning curve for soft matter is still being traversed. Opportunities and applications for soft materials are ever expanding. Established uses in detergents, plastics, paints, foods and personal care products are being augmented by new applications involving biopolymers and nanotechnology. The field of soft matter is interdisciplinary: it encompasses aspects of physics, chemistry, materials science, biochemistry and chemical/mechanical engineering. As a consequence of this, the subject is either neglected entirely or not covered in adequate detail in conventional texts. There is a need to fill this gap with an up-to-date overview of the dynamics and thermodynamics of soft matter.

Introduction to Soft Matter presents a unified approach to soft materials. Following an introduction that includes experimental techniques for investigating soft matter, four further successive chapters cover polymers, colloids,

amphiphiles (surfactants and lipids) and liquid crystals. In each chapter basic physical chemistry is dealt with first before an outline of applications is given. Equations are kept to an essential minimum, and derivations are included where they illustrate important thermodynamic or statistical mechanical concepts. References to texts that deal with aspects of the subjects covered in the book as well as general texts are given. Sets of questions and answers are provided at the end of each chapter.

This book is well laid out and presented. It is highly recommended, not only for students from various disciplines taking courses on colloids, polymers or soft condensed matter, but also as an excellent reference for researchers in evolving areas of an intriguing topic.

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Your Choice of Food Starches—The National Starch Guide[☆]

National Starch & Chemical, 2000, 23 pages, free of charge from National Starch & Chemical, Prestbury Court, Greencourts Business Park, 333 Styal Road, Manchester, M22 5LW, UK

Starches have been used as thickening agents and adhesives for a variety of purposes for longer than their being regarded as either a carbohydrate or a chemical. Starch presents itself in a number of plants that have been cultivated, and therefore, is available, worldwide.

Speciality starches are produced from the natural polymers found within such plants. They provide viscosity and stability, influence texture and rheology, enhance mouth-feel and visual appeal in a wide variety of foods. Starches can also be used to provide sophisticated functions such as adhesion, flavour encapsulation and replacement or extension of other ingredients such as gelatine, gums, fats or dietary fibre.

The *National Starch Guide* illustrates how a range of speciality starch allows varying degrees of process tolerance, from cold processing to high-shear, high-temperature systems. They contribute acid, freeze/thaw and textural stability. The guide also draws attention to how selecting the right starch for an application is all-important and can