

# Ion Exchange Sorbents for Metals Extraction - Analysis & Sorbent Use Selection Guide



## UCT Part Numbers

**UCT ENVIRO-CLEAN®**  
Ion-Exchange Cartridges

## Introduction:

The determination of trace metals in aqueous environmental samples or other matrices often require sample pretreatment and cleanup procedures prior to analysis by using specific ionexchange sorbents. The sorbents are used to eliminate matrix interferences and achieve high concentrations of metal ions for good analytical accuracy. They are important when using such techniques as AA, IES and ICP-AES.

The use of ion-exchange sorbents for the preconcentration, separation and determination of metal ions for trace analysis is well established in the literature. Selection of an appropriate sorbent ensures both high efficiency in metal chelating while minimizing the mass of sorbent required for a particular analytical task. A high efficiency sorbent means that a smaller bed mass may be used thereby reducing the quantity of solvent required for elution yielding greater analytical sensitivity.

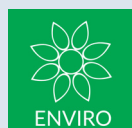
**Recommendations in this application note include the following metal ions:**

Zinc (II)	Arsenic (V)	Tin (IV)	Selenous (IV)
Mercury (II)	Chromium (III)	Copper (II)	Platinum (0)

**Other metal ions may be extracted by the use of these ion-exchange sorbents**

## Sorbent Selection for Metals Extraction:

Solid-phase sorbents have differing capacity and selectivity for various metal ions due to the specific nature of the ion-exchange functional group, the metal species and the valence state of the metal of interest. Depending on the specific metal ion of interest, elution of the cartridge may be most efficient using both the acid followed by the base elution procedure. This can be determined by looking at the following **Extraction Protocol Tables**. For example, when eluting Hg(II) from PSA the highest recovery is obtained using acid elution (green box) followed by base elution (yellow box).



## Sample Analysis:

### 1. Sample Extraction

- a) Assemble an all glass extraction apparatus
- b) Place a UCT ENVIRO-CLEAN® cartridge on the apparatus

**Note:** Cartridge selection will depend on the volume of sample or the concentration of metal to be extracted

- c) Condition 1mL cartridge by adding 3 mL of methanol. (Larger cartridges will require a larger volume of solvent and water wash volume in steps c) and d))
- d) Add 3 mL of reagent water and allow to drip through the cartridge

**Note:** Do not allow the cartridge to dry out after addition of water, otherwise repeat step d).

Add 10-50 mL of sample water to the cartridge. A larger sample volume may be used depending on metal concentration or suspended solids content

- e) Adjust vacuum setting so that the water flows at 1-3 mL/minute until sample has passed completely through the cartridge
- f) Allow the cartridge to air dry for about 1 minute under full vacuum

### 2. Elution Acid

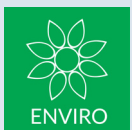
- a) Prepare a 100 mM nitric acid elution solution
- b) Place a collection vial in the vacuum manifold
- c) Add 3 mL of the nitric acid solution to the cartridge
- d) Adjust flow rate for a flow of 1-3 mL/minute
- e) Dilute eluant to an appropriate volume for detection using reagent water
- f) Sample is ready for analysis

### 3. Elution Base

- a) Prepare a 100 mM triethylamine elution solution
- b) Place a collection vial in the vacuum manifold
- c) Add 3 mL of the triethylamine solution to the cartridge
- d) Adjust flow rate for a flow of 1-3 mL/minute
- e) Dilute eluant to an appropriate volume for detection using reagent water
- f) Sample is ready for analysis

### 4. Analysis

- a) Prepare calibration curves for use with atomic absorption (AA) or Inductively Coupled Plasma Atomic Emission Spectroscopy (ICP-AES) using appropriate metals standards



## Extraction Protocol Tables

**How to use these tables:** When choosing an ion-exchange sorbent to capture arsenic (V) for example, all ion-exchange sorbents will capture a small quantity of metal ions, however, only a base extraction would elute metal ions from these sorbents. For extraction of zinc ions, all sorbents would have moderate to high capacity but elution could only occur from the sorbent using acidic elution conditions.

### Acid Extraction Protocol

Sorbent	Cu (II)	Zn (II)	As (V)	Sn (IV)	Se (IV)	Hg (II)	Cr (III)	Pt (0)
PSA	Good to High Capacity	Good to High Capacity	Little or No Capacity	Little or No Capacity	Good to High Capacity	Good to High Capacity	Moderate Capacity	Moderate Capacity
BCX-HL	Good to High Capacity	Moderate Capacity	Little or No Capacity	Little or No Capacity	Little or No Capacity	Good to High Capacity	Moderate Capacity	Little or No Capacity
CCX	Moderate Capacity	Moderate Capacity	Little or No Capacity	Moderate Capacity	Little or No Capacity	Good to High Capacity	Little or No Capacity	Good to High Capacity
TAX	Good to High Capacity	Good to High Capacity	Little or No Capacity	Moderate Capacity	Little or No Capacity	Good to High Capacity	Moderate Capacity	Moderate Capacity
THX	Good to High Capacity	Moderate Capacity	Little or No Capacity	Little or No Capacity	Moderate Capacity	Moderate Capacity	Little or No Capacity	Little or No Capacity
NAX	Good to High Capacity	Good to High Capacity	Little or No Capacity	Little or No Capacity	Good to High Capacity	Good to High Capacity	Little or No Capacity	Little or No Capacity

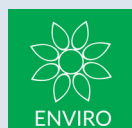
### Base Extraction Protocol

Sorbent	Cu (II)	Zn (II)	As (V)	Sn (IV)	Se (IV)	Hg (II)	Cr (III)	Pt (0)
PSA	Little or No Capacity	Little or No Capacity	Moderate Capacity	Moderate Capacity	Good to High Capacity	Moderate Capacity	Little or No Capacity	Little or No Capacity
BCX-HL	Little or No Capacity	Little or No Capacity	Moderate Capacity	Good to High Capacity	Moderate Capacity	Good to High Capacity	Moderate Capacity	Little or No Capacity
CCX	Little or No Capacity	Little or No Capacity	Moderate Capacity	Good to High Capacity	Moderate Capacity	Moderate Capacity	Little or No Capacity	Little or No Capacity
TAX	Little or No Capacity	Little or No Capacity	Moderate Capacity	Good to High Capacity	Moderate Capacity	Good to High Capacity	Little or No Capacity	Little or No Capacity
THX	Little or No Capacity	Little or No Capacity	Moderate Capacity	Moderate Capacity	Moderate Capacity	Good to High Capacity	Little or No Capacity	Little or No Capacity
NAX	Little or No Capacity	Little or No Capacity	Moderate Capacity	Moderate Capacity	Moderate Capacity	Moderate Capacity	Little or No Capacity	Little or No Capacity

	Good to High Capacity
	Moderate Capacity
	Little or No Capacity

### Ion-Exchange Sorbent Key

PSA Primary secondary amine  
 BCX-HL Benzene sulfonic acid – high load  
 CCX Carboxylic acid  
 TAX Triacetic acid  
 THX Sulfhydryl (thiopropyl)  
 NAX Aminopropyl



### Primary Secondary Amine (PSA)

The PSA ion-exchange sorbent has a significant capacity for Hg(II) Se(IV) followed by a lesser capacity for Sn(IV), Cu(II), Zn(II) and Cr(III). Metal ions are readily eluted from PSA by the use of weak acid solutions such as 100mM nitric acid solution. Additional recovery for selenium can be obtained by following the acid elution by the use of 100 mM triethylamine solution

### Benzenesulfonic Acid-High Load (BCX-HL)

The BCX-HL ion-exchange sorbent is the least selective of all ion-exchange sorbents and has significant capacity for Hg(II) and Sn(IV) thus ensuring high extraction efficiency for trace analysis. It is also a strong sorbent for Cu(II), Zn(II), Cr(III) and small amounts of Pt. In most cases, metal ions are readily eluted from BCX-HL by the use of 100mM nitric acid solution. Improvement in Hg(II) recovery yield and Sn(IV) can be achieved when eluting with 100 mM triethylamine solution.

### Carboxylic Acid (CCX)

The CCX sorbents have high selectivity for Sn(IV) and Hg(II). Metal ions are readily eluted from CCX by the use of weak acid solutions such as 100mM nitric acid solution. Sn(IV) is eluted using 100 mM triethylamine solution. Additional Hg(II) is released under basic elution.

### Triacetic Acid (TAX)

TAX sorbents have the highest affinity for Sn(IV) and Hg(II) followed by lesser amounts of Cu(II) and Zn(II). Metal ions are readily eluted from TAX by the use of weak acid solutions such as 100 mM nitric acid solution. Sn(IV) is eluted using 100 mM triethylamine solution. Additional Hg(II) is released under basic elution.

### Sulfhydryl THX (thiopropyl)

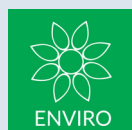
THX sorbents have the highest affinity for Hg(II) and Sn(IV), and approximately equal weights of Sn(IV) and Cu(II). Metal ions are readily eluted from THX by the use of weak acid solutions such as 100mM nitric acid solution. Sn(IV), Se(IV) and Hg(II) are eluted using 100 mM triethylamine solution.

### Aminopropyl (NAX)

The NAX ion-exchange sorbent has a significant capacity for Hg(II) followed by Se(IV). Metal ions are readily eluted from NAX by the use of weak acid solutions such as 100mM nitric acid solution. Additional Hg(II) is released under basic elution.

For further data and specific information and discussion of each sorbent see separate UCT publications: **Topics in Solid-Phase Extraction: Metals Analysis.**

\*UCT ENVIRO-CLEAN® Ion-exchange cartridges are available in a variety of cartridge sizes, sorbent mass and particle size to most analytical requirements. For further information, contact UCT.



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