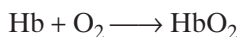


APPLICATION *Biochemistry***Carbon Dioxide and Respiration**

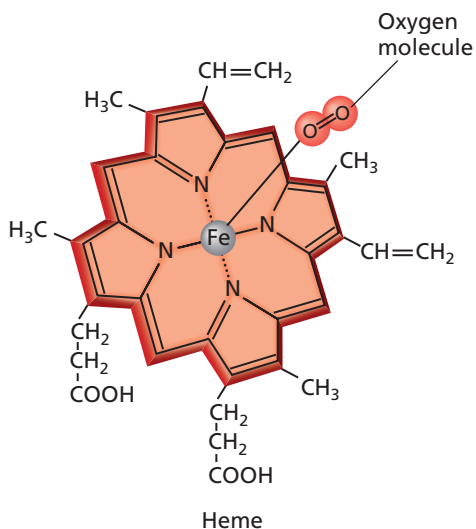
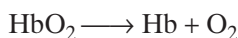
Many organisms, including humans, carry out cellular respiration. In this process, cells break down food molecules and release the energy used to build those molecules during photosynthesis. Glucose, $C_6H_{12}O_6$, is a common substance broken down in respiration. The following chemical equation expresses this process.



In humans and most other vertebrate animals, the oxygen needed for this reaction is delivered to cells by hemoglobin found in red blood cells. Oxygen binds with hemoglobin as blood passes through capillaries in the lungs, as represented by the following reaction.



Hb represents the hemoglobin molecule, and HbO_2 represents oxyhemoglobin, which is hemoglobin with bound oxygen. When the red blood cells pass through capillaries near cells that have depleted their oxygen supply through respiration, the reaction reverses and oxyhemoglobin gives up its oxygen.

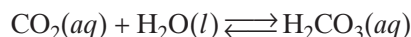


Hemoglobin (protein)

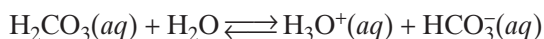


Red blood cells

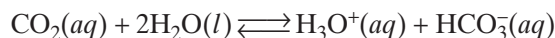
Carbon dioxide produced during respiration is a waste product that must be expelled from an organism. Various things happen when CO_2 enters the blood. Seven percent dissolves in the plasma, about 23% binds loosely to hemoglobin, and the remaining 70% reacts reversibly with water in plasma to form hydrogen carbonate, HCO_3^- ions. To form HCO_3^- ions, CO_2 first combines with H_2O to form carbonic acid, H_2CO_3 , in a reversible reaction.



The dissolved carbonic acid ionizes to HCO_3^- ions and aqueous H^+ ions in the form of H_3O^+ .



The combined equilibrium reaction follows.



When the blood reaches the lungs, the reaction reverses and the blood releases CO_2 , which is then exhaled to the surroundings.

The oxygen carrier molecule, heme, is a component of the more-complex protein hemoglobin. Note that each hemoglobin molecule has four heme subunits. Hemoglobin is a component of red blood cells.