

4 The Three-Dimensional Structure of Proteins

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Principle 1 (1 of 2)

Protein structures are stabilized by noncovalent interactions and forces. Formation of a thermodynamically favorable structure depends on the influences of the hydrophobic effect, hydrogen bonds, ionic interactions, and van der Waals forces. Natural protein structures are constrained by peptide bonds, whose configurations can be described by the dihedral angles φ and ψ .

P2 Principle 2 (1 of 2)

Protein segments can adopt regular secondary structures such as the α helix and the β conformation. These structures are defined by particular values of φ and ψ and their formation is impacted by the amino acid composition of the segment. All of the φ and ψ values for a given protein structure can be visualized using a Ramachandran plot.

Principle 3 (1 of 2)

Tertiary structure describes the well-defined, three-dimensional fold adopted by a protein. Protein structures are often built by combinatorial use of common protein folds or motifs. Quaternary structure describes the interactions between components of a multisubunit assembly.

Principle 4 (1 of 2)

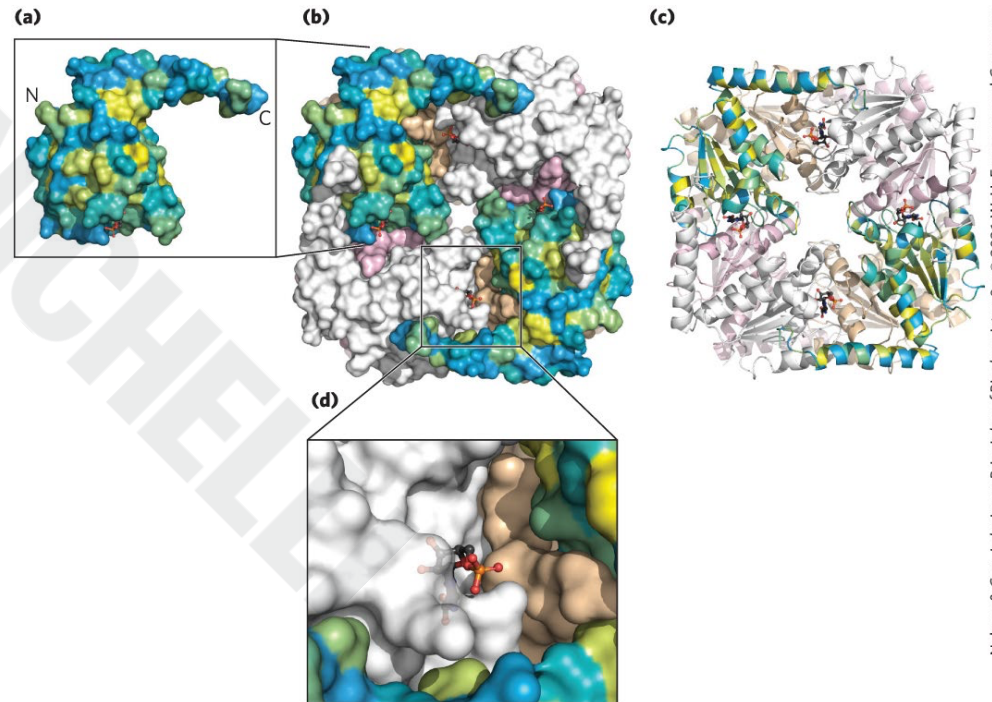
Tertiary structure is determined by amino acid sequence. Even though protein folding is complex, some denatured proteins can spontaneously refold into their active conformation based only on the chemical properties of their constituent amino acids. Cellular proteostasis involves numerous pathways that regulate the folding, unfolding, and degradation of proteins. Many human diseases arise from protein misfolding and defects in proteostasis.

P5 Principle 5 (1 of 2)

The three-dimensional structures of proteins can be defined. Structural biologists use a variety of instruments and computational methods to solve biomolecular structures. The choice of method may depend on factors such as the size of the protein being studied, its properties, or the desired resolution of the final structure.

The Relationship between Protein Structure and Function

- in principle, proteins can assume an uncountable number of special arrangements, or **conformations**
- chemical or structural functions relate to unique three-dimensional structures



4.1 Overview of Protein Structure

Principle 1 (2 of 2)

Protein structures are stabilized by noncovalent interactions and forces. Formation of a thermodynamically favorable structure depends on the influences of the hydrophobic effect, hydrogen bonds, ionic interactions, and van der Waals forces. Natural protein structures are constrained by peptide bonds, whose configurations can be described by the dihedral angles φ and ψ .

Protein Conformations

- limited number of conformations predominate under biological conditions
- conformations = thermodynamically the most stable, that is, lowest free energy (G)
- **native** = proteins in any functional, folded conformations

A Protein's Conformation Is Stabilized Largely by Weak Interactions

- **stability** = tendency of a protein to maintain a native conformation
- unfolded proteins have high conformational entropy
- chemical interactions stabilize native conformations:
 - strong disulfide (covalent) bonds are uncommon
 - weak (noncovalent) interactions and forces are numerous
 - hydrogen bonds
 - hydrophobic effect
 - ionic interactions

Packing of Hydrophobic Amino Acids Away from Water Favors Protein Folding

- **hydrophobic effect** = predominating weak interaction
- **solvation layer** = highly structured shell of H₂O around a hydrophobic molecule
 - decreases when nonpolar groups cluster together
 - decrease causes a favorable increase in net entropy
- hydrophobic R chains form a hydrophobic protein core

Polar Groups Contribute Hydrogen Bonds and Ion Pairs to Protein Folding

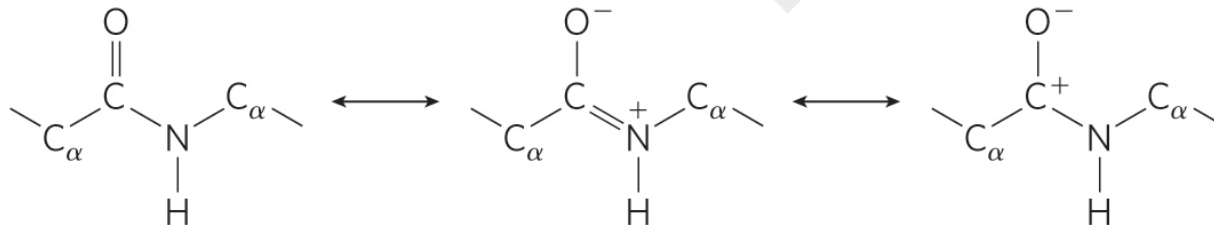
- repeating secondary structures (α helices and β sheets) optimize hydrogen bonding
- interaction of oppositely charged groups = ion pair = salt bridge
 - strength increases in an environment of lower dielectric constant, ϵ
 - polar aqueous solvent: $\epsilon \sim 80$
 - nonpolar protein interior: $\epsilon \sim 4$

Individual van der Waals Interactions Are Weak but Combine to Promote Folding

- van der Waals interactions = dipole-dipole interactions over short distances
- individual interactions contribute little to overall protein stability
- high number of interactions can be substantial

The Peptide Bond Is Rigid and Planar

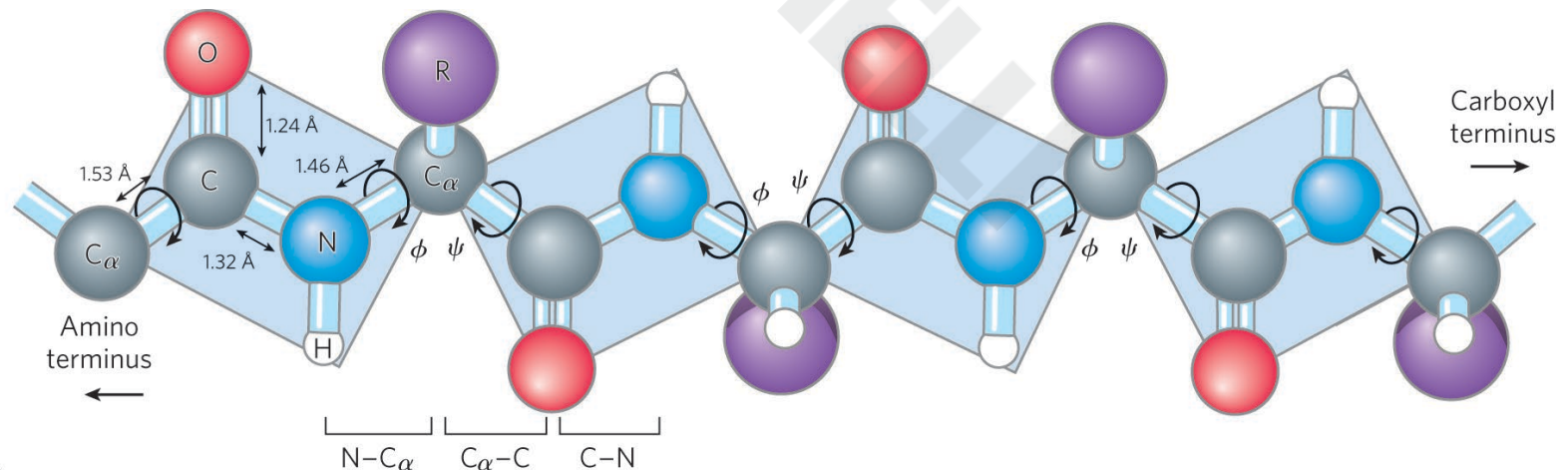
- 3 covalent bonds separate the α carbons of adjacent amino acid residues: $C_{\alpha}—C—N—C_{\alpha}$
- resonance between the carbonyl oxygen and the amide nitrogen
- partial negative charge and partial positive charge sets up a small electric dipole



(a)

Peptide C—N Bonds Cannot Rotate Freely

- 6 atoms of the **peptide group** lie in a single plane
- partial double-bond character of C—N peptide bond prevents rotation, limiting range of conformations

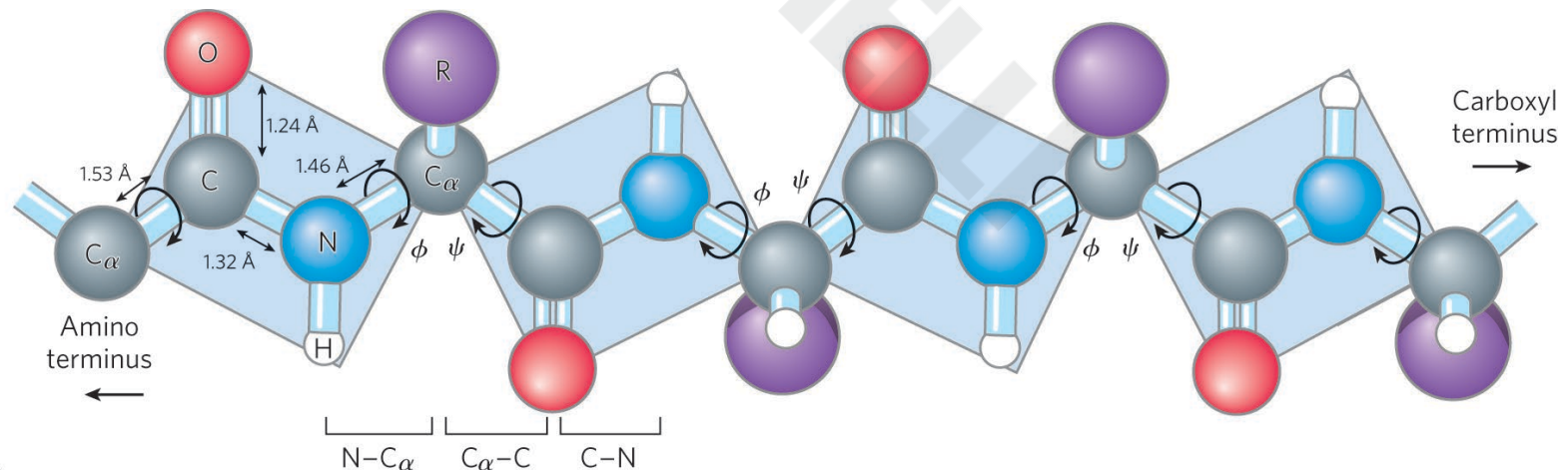


(b)

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Dihedral Angles Define Peptide Conformations

- 3 dihedral angles:
 - ϕ (phi) = between -180 and $+180$ degrees
 - ψ (psi) = between -180 and $+180$ degrees
 - ω (omega) = ± 180 degrees for trans

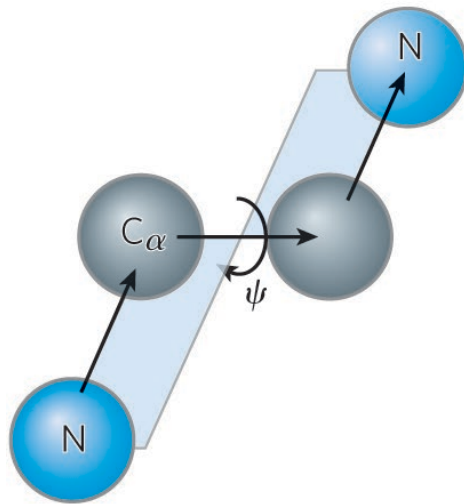


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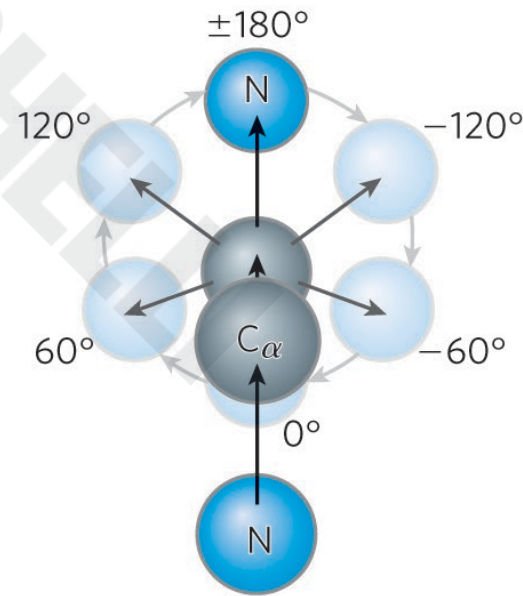
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Prohibited Conformations

- many φ (phi) and ψ (psi) values are prohibited by steric interference
 - φ and ψ cannot both = 0 degrees



(c)



(d)

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4.2 Protein Secondary Structure

P2 Principle 2 (2 of 2)

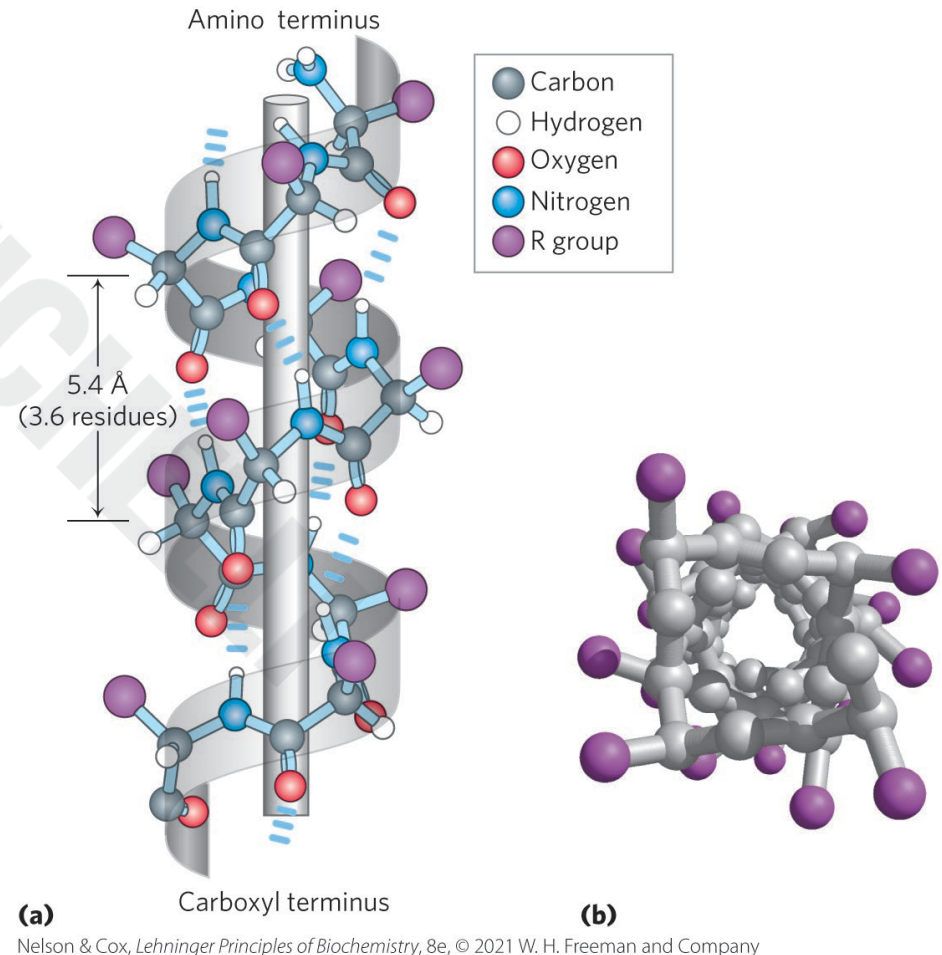
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Protein Secondary Structure

- **secondary structure** = describes the spatial arrangement of the main-chain atoms in a segment of a polypeptide chain
 - *regular* secondary structure = φ and ψ remain the same throughout the segment
 - common types = α helix, β conformation, β turn, random coils

The α Helix Is a Common Protein Secondary Structure

- **α helix** = simplest arrangement, maximum number of hydrogen bonds
 - backbone wound around an imaginary longitudinal axis
 - R groups protrude out from the backbone
 - each helical turn = 3.6 residues, $\sim 5.4 \text{ \AA}$



Dihedral Angles Define Protein Conformations

Structure	ϕ	ψ
α Helix	-57°	-47°
β Conformation: Antiparallel	-139°	$+135^\circ$
β Conformation: Parallel	-119°	$+113^\circ$
Collagen triple helix	-51°	$+153^\circ$
β Turn type I: i+1	-60°	-30°
β Turn type I: i+2	-90°	0°
β Turn type II: i+1	-60°	$+120^\circ$
β Turn type II: i+2	$+80^\circ$	0°

Table 4-1 Idealized ϕ and ψ Angles for Common Secondary Structures in Proteins

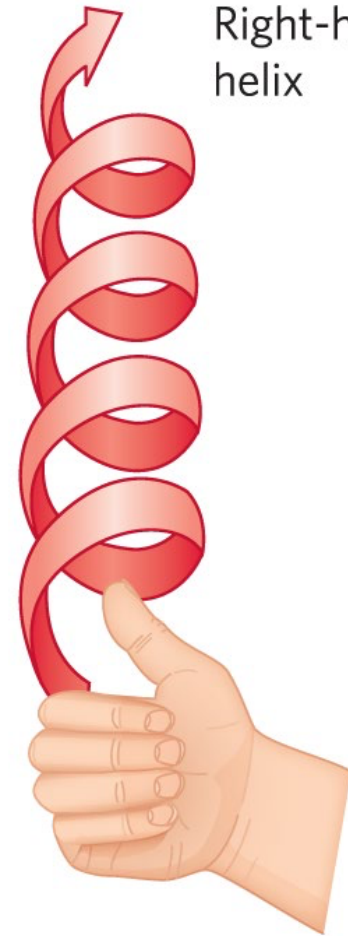
Handedness of the α Helix

- right-handed:
 - R groups protruding away from the helical backbone
 - most common
- extended left-handed: theoretically less stable, not observed in proteins

Left-handed helix

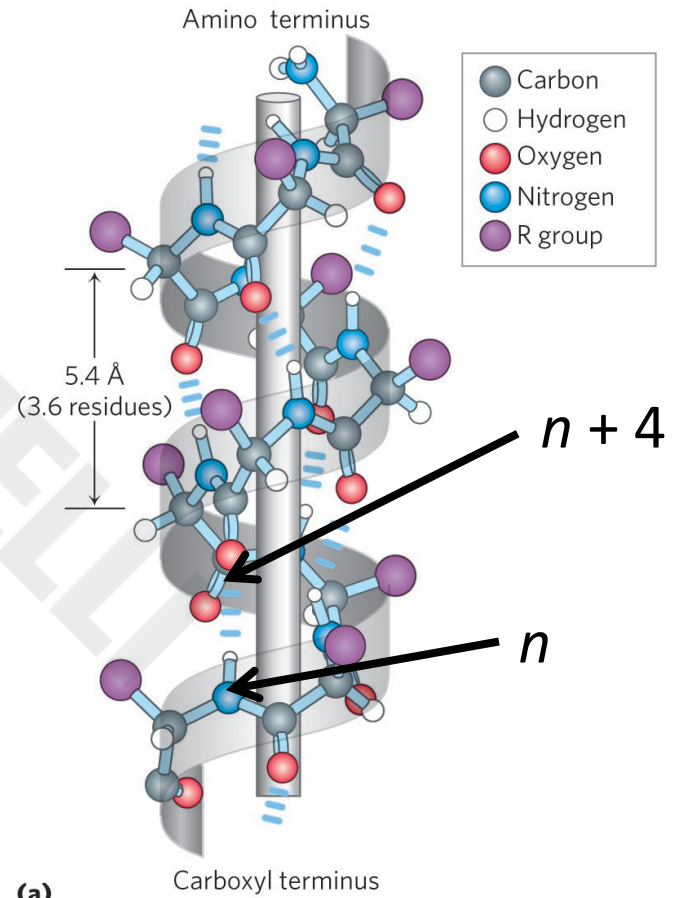


Right-handed helix



Intrahelical Hydrogen Bonds

- between hydrogen atom attached to the electronegative nitrogen atom of residue n and the electronegative carbonyl oxygen atom of residue $n + 4$
- confers significant stability



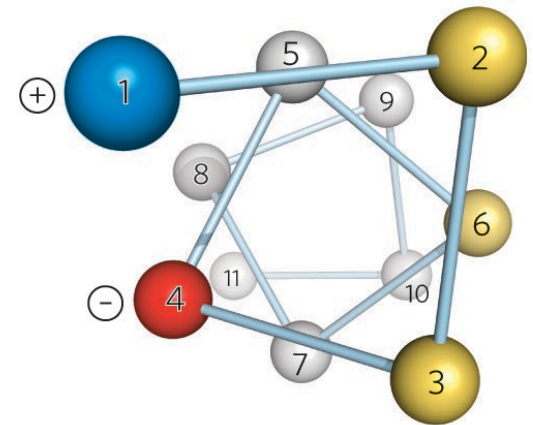
(a)

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Amino Acid Sequence Affects Stability of the α Helix

- amino acid residues have an intrinsic propensity to form an α helix
- interactions between R chains spaced 3–4 residues apart can stabilize or destabilize α helix
 - charge, size, and shape of R chains can destabilize
 - formation of ion pairs and hydrophobic effect can stabilize

Helical wheel

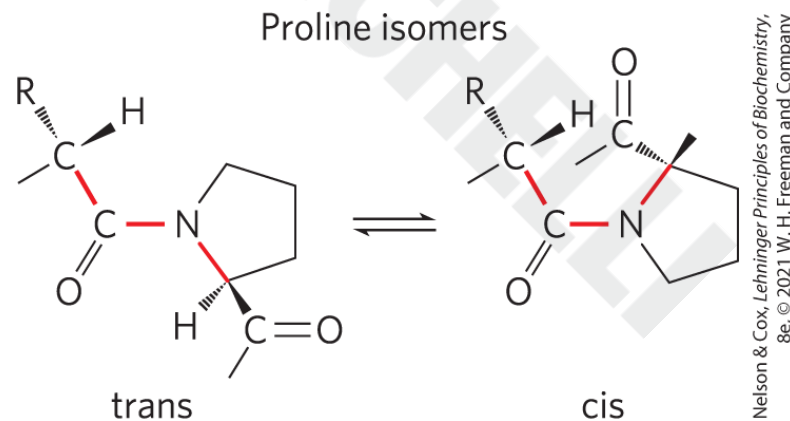


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Proline and Glycine Occur Infrequently in an α Helix

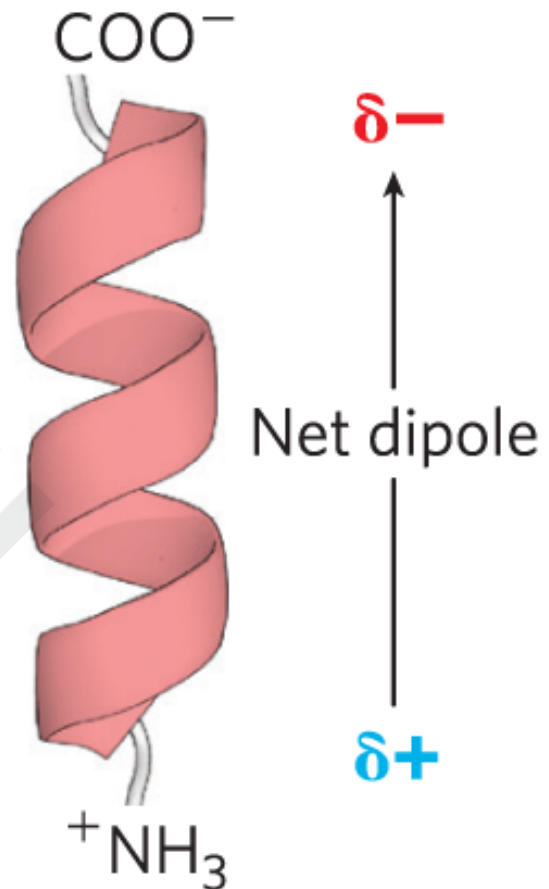
- proline = introduces destabilizing kink in helix
 - nitrogen atom is part of rigid ring
 - rotation about N—C $_{\alpha}$ bond not possible



- glycine = high conformational flexibility, take up coiled structures

Amino Acid Residues Near the End of the α Helix Segment Affect Stability

- small electric dipoles in each peptide bond align through hydrogen bonds
- negatively charged amino acids often found near the NH_3^+ terminus
- positively charged amino acids often found near the COO^- terminus

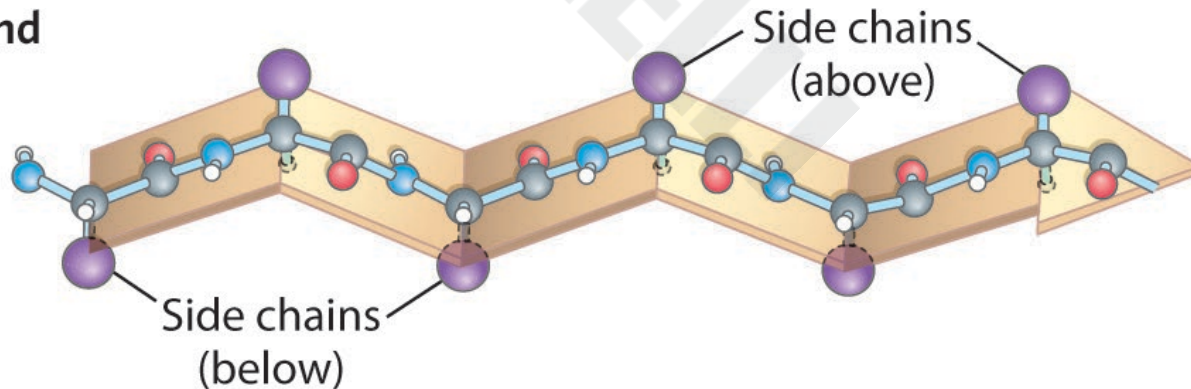


The β Conformation Organizes Polypeptide Chains into Sheets

- **β conformation** = backbone extends into a zigzag
 - β strand = single protein segment
 - **β sheet** = several strands in β conformation side by side

(a) β Strand

Side view



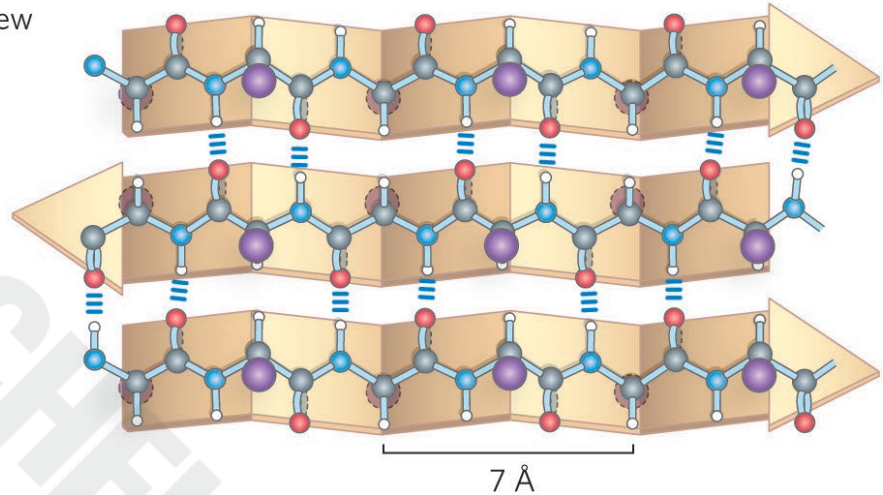
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Adjacent Polypeptide Chains in a β Sheet Can Be Antiparallel or Parallel

- antiparallel = opposite orientation
 - occur more frequently
- parallel = same orientation
- H bonds form between backbone atoms of adjacent segments

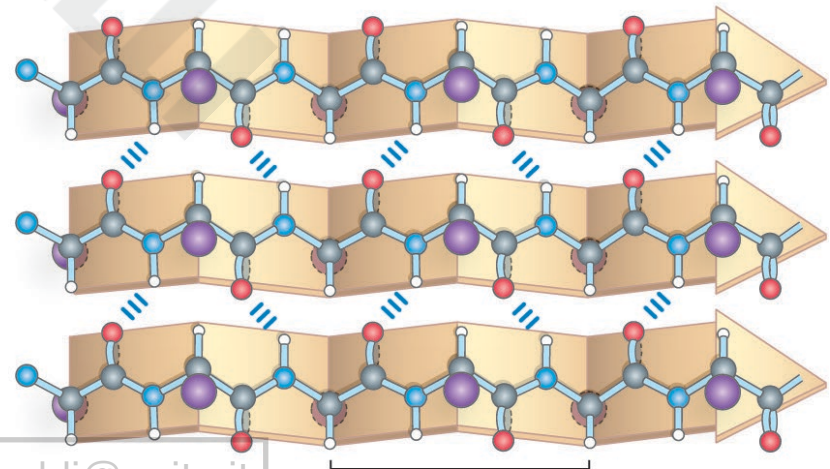
(b) Antiparallel β sheet

Top view



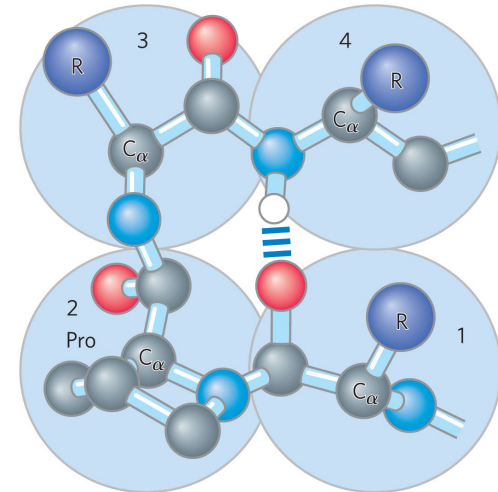
(c) Parallel β sheet

Top view

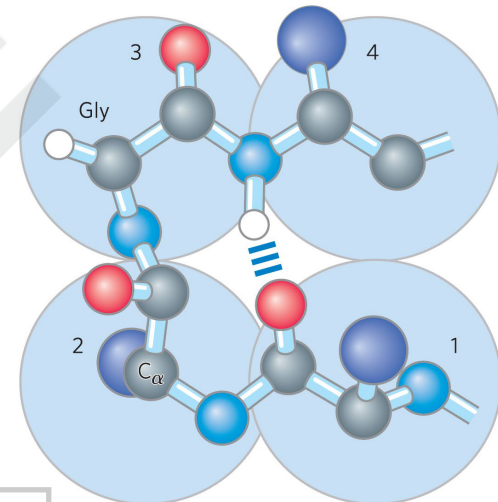


β Turns Are Common in Proteins

- **β turns** = connect ends of two adjacent segments of an antiparallel β sheet
 - 180° turn
 - involves 4 residues
 - hydrogen bond forms between first and fourth residue
 - Gly (residue 2) and Pro (residue 3) often occur in β turns



Type I β turn

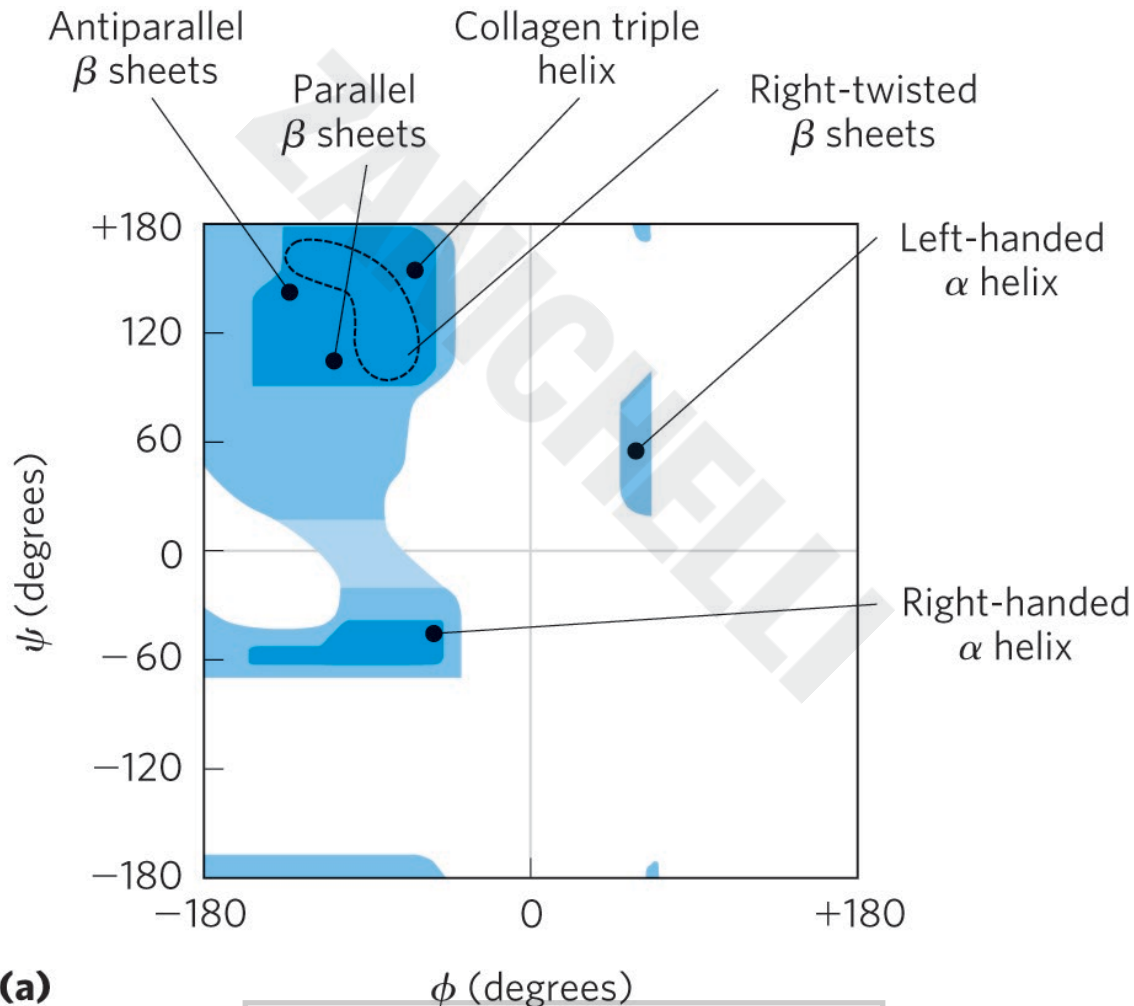


Type II β turn

Common Secondary Structures Have Characteristic Dihedral Angles

- dihedral angles φ (phi) and ψ (psi) associated with each residue completely described secondary structure
- **Ramachandran plots:**
 - visualize all φ and ψ angles
 - test quality of three-dimensional protein structures

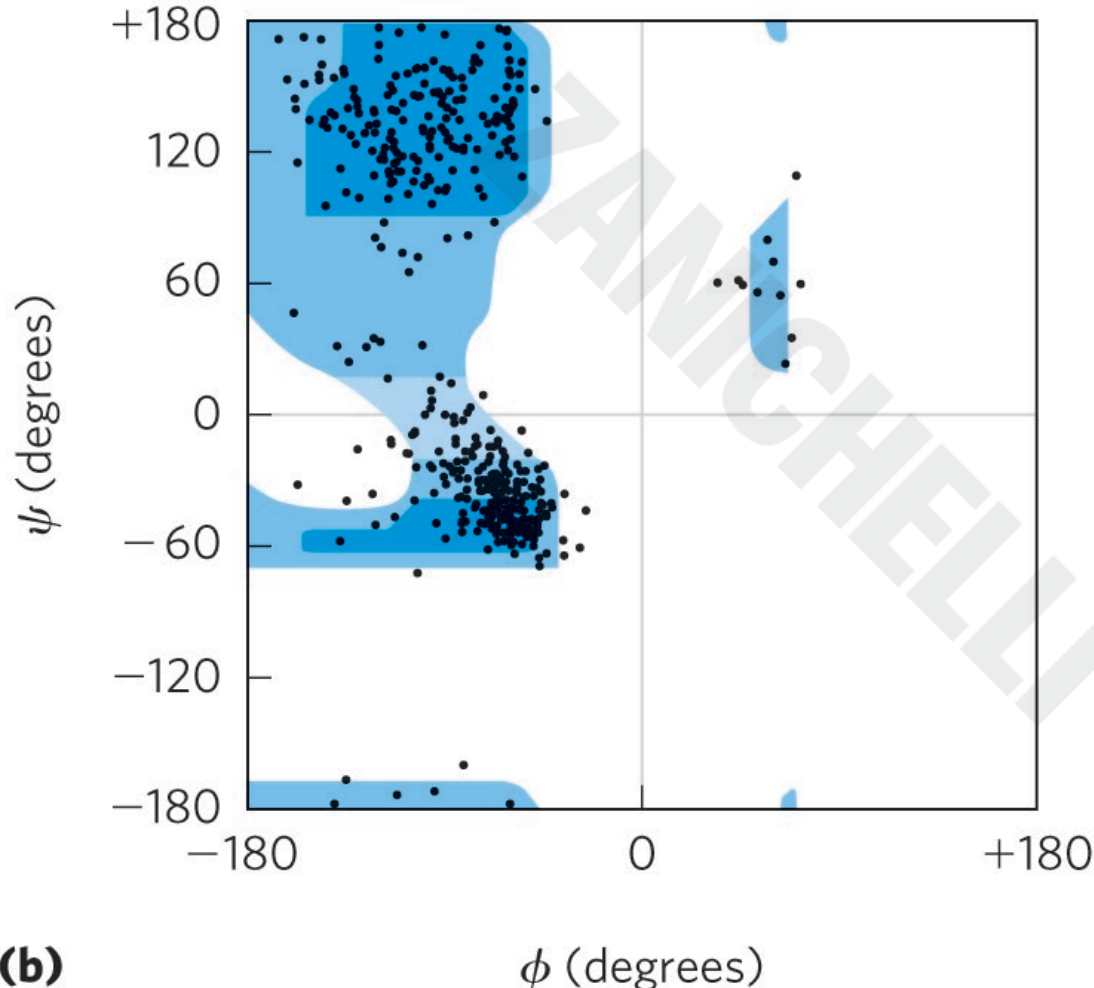
Secondary Structure Conformations are Defined by ϕ and ψ Values



(a)

ϕ (degrees)

ϕ and ψ Values from Known Proteins Fall into Expected Regions



- glycine frequently falls outside the expected ranges

4.3 Protein Tertiary and Quaternary Structures

Principle 3 (2 of 2)

Tertiary structure describes the well-defined, three-dimensional fold adopted by a protein. Protein structures are often built by combinatorial use of common protein folds or motifs. Quaternary structure describes the interactions between components of a multisubunit assembly.

Protein Tertiary and Quaternary Structure

- **tertiary structure** = overall three-dimensional arrangement of all the atoms in a protein
 - weak interactions and covalent bonds hold interacting segments in position
- **quaternary structure** = arrangement of 2+ separate polypeptide chains in three-dimensional complexes

Classifying Proteins

- four major types of protein groups based on polypeptide chains:
 - **fibrous proteins** = arranged in long strands or sheets
 - **globular proteins** = folded into a spherical or globular shape
 - **membrane proteins** = embedded in hydrophobic lipid membranes
 - **intrinsically disordered proteins** = lacking stable tertiary structures

Fibrous Proteins Are Adapted for a Structural Function

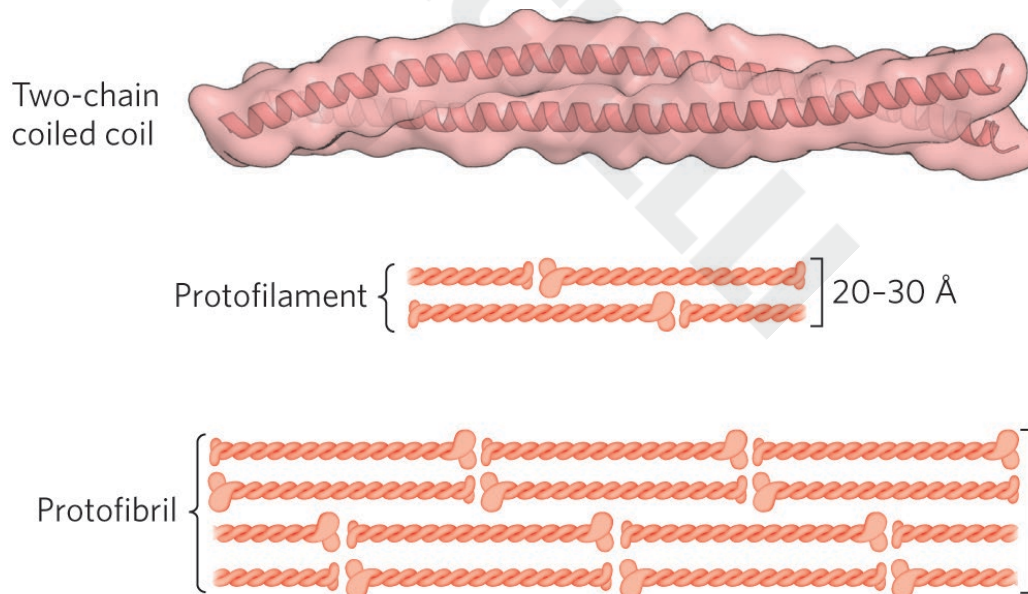
- give strength and/or flexibility to structures
- simple repeating element of secondary structure
- H₂O insoluble due to high concentrations of hydrophobic residues

Table 4-2 Secondary Structures and Properties of Some Fibrous Proteins

Structure	Characteristics	Examples of occurrence
α Helix, cross-linked by disulfide bonds	Tough, insoluble protective structures of varying hardness and flexibility	α -Keratin of hair, feathers, nails
β Conformation	Soft, flexible filaments	Silk fibron
Collagen triple helix	High tensile strength, without stretch	Collagen of tendons, bone matrix

The Structure of α -Keratin in Hair

- α -keratin helix is a right-handed α helix
- two strands of α -keratin, oriented in parallel, wrap about each other to form a supertwisted coiled coil
 - supertwisted helical path is left-handed



(a)

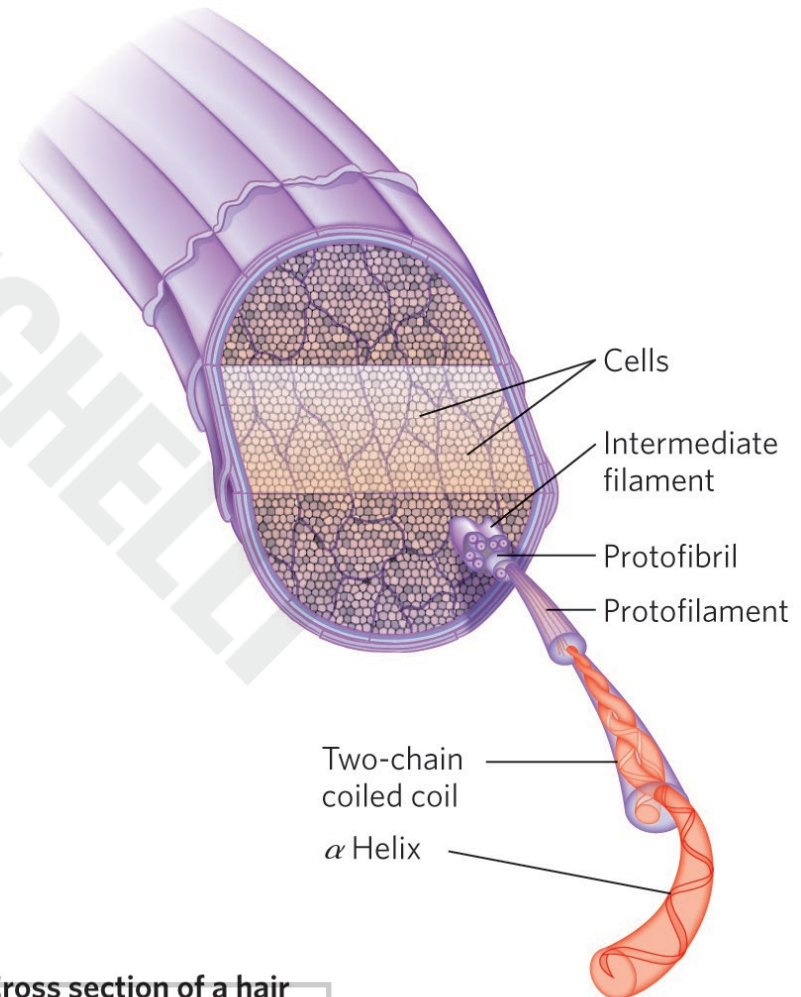
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Hair Contains Many α -Keratin Filaments

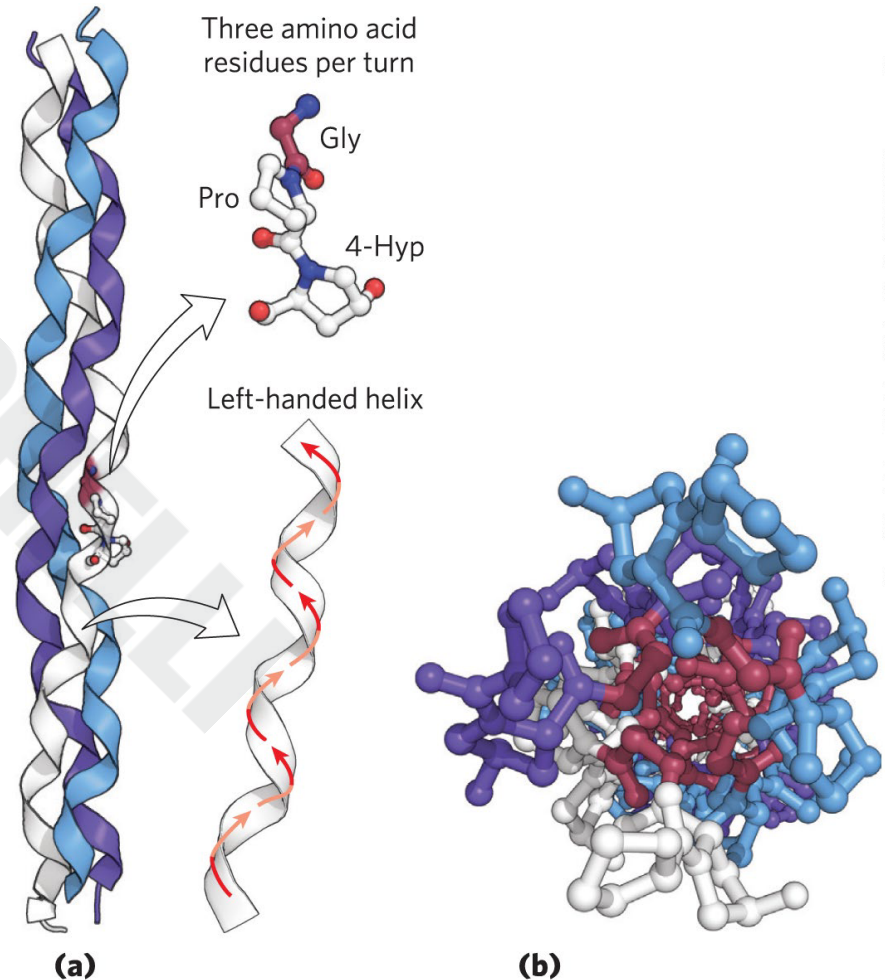
- rich in hydrophobic residues: Ala, Val, Leu, Ile, Met, Phe
- cross-links stabilized by disulfide bonds



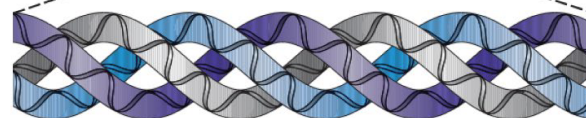
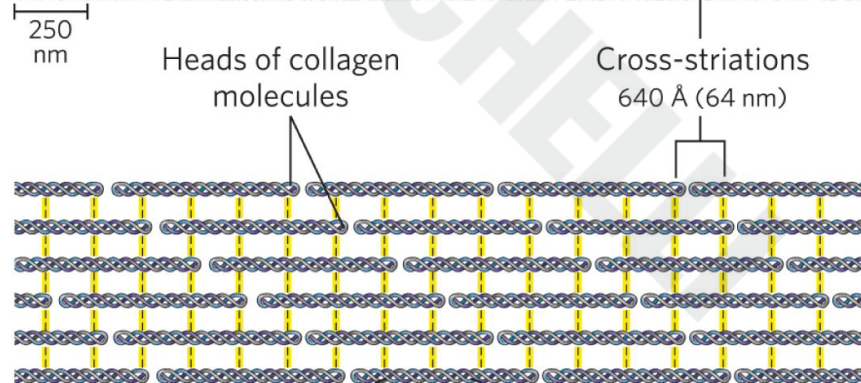
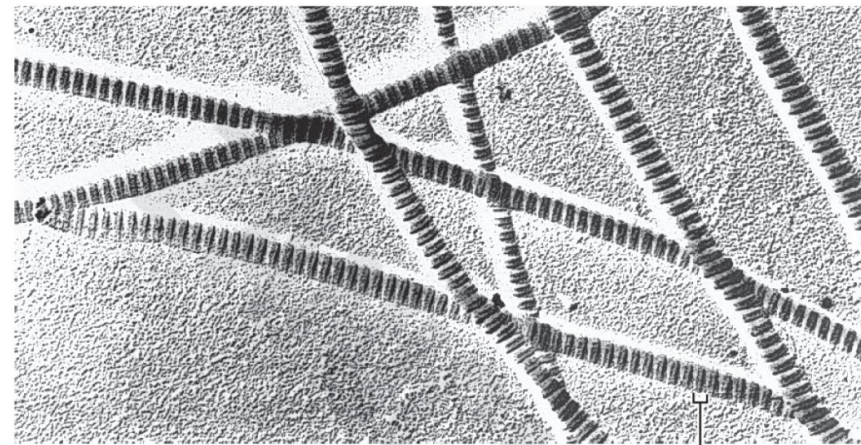
(b) Cross section of a hair

The Structure of Collagen

- **collagen** = found in connective tissue
 - secondary structure = left-handed, repeating tripeptide unit Gly–X–Y, where X is often Pro and Y is often 4-Hyp
 - tertiary and quaternary structure = right-handed twisting of 3 separate polypeptides



The Structure of Collagen Fibrils

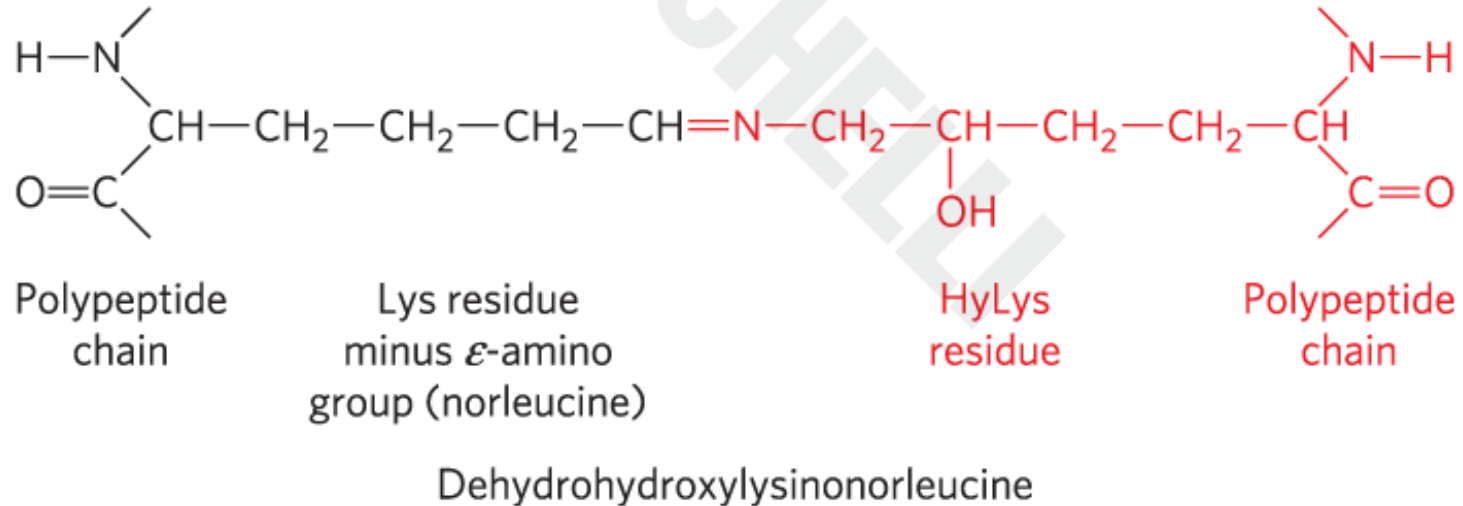


Section of collagen molecule

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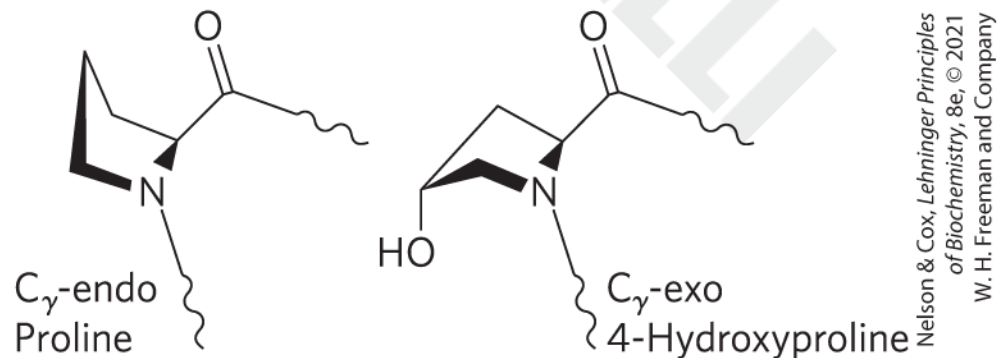
Covalent Cross-Links in Collagen Fibrils

- cross-linked by covalent bonds involving Lys, HyLys (5-hydroxylysine), or His
 - links create uncommon amino acid residues

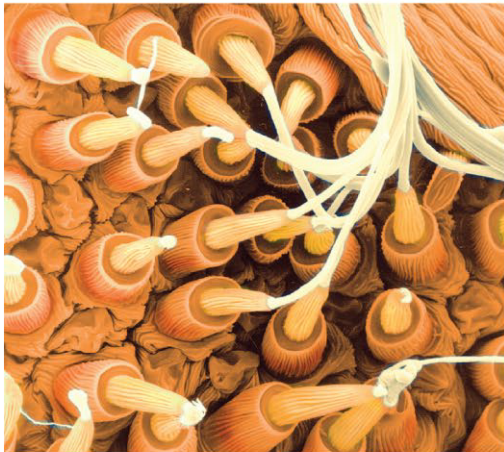
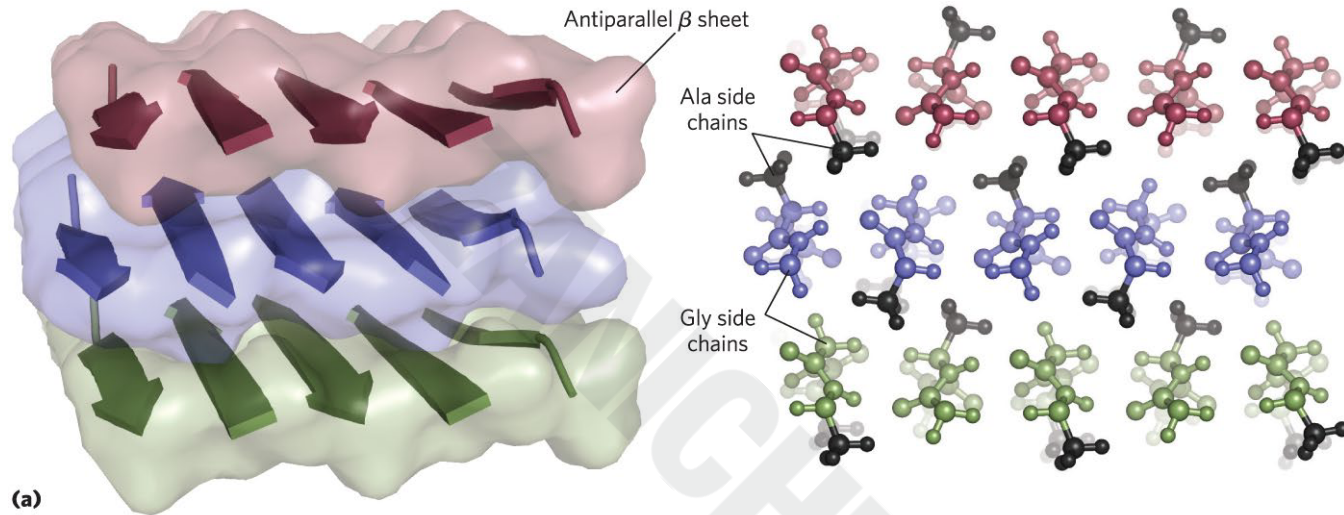


Scurvy, Vitamin C, and Collagen Formation

- scurvy is caused by a lack of vitamin C
 - characterized by general degeneration of connective tissue
- vitamin C is required for the hydroxylation of proline and lysine in collagen



The Structure of Fibroin



70 μm

- main protein in silk
- predominantly β conformation
- rich in Ala and Gly
- stabilized by hydrogen bonding and van der Waals interactions

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(b) Tina Weatherby Carvalho/MicroAngela.

Structural Diversity Reflects Functional Diversity in Globular Proteins

- globular proteins:
 - fold back on each other
 - more compact than fibrous proteins
 - enzymes, transport proteins, motor proteins, regulatory proteins, immunoglobulins

β Conformation
 $2,000 \times 5 \text{ \AA}$

α Helix
 $900 \times 11 \text{ \AA}$

Native globular form
 $100 \times 60 \text{ \AA}$

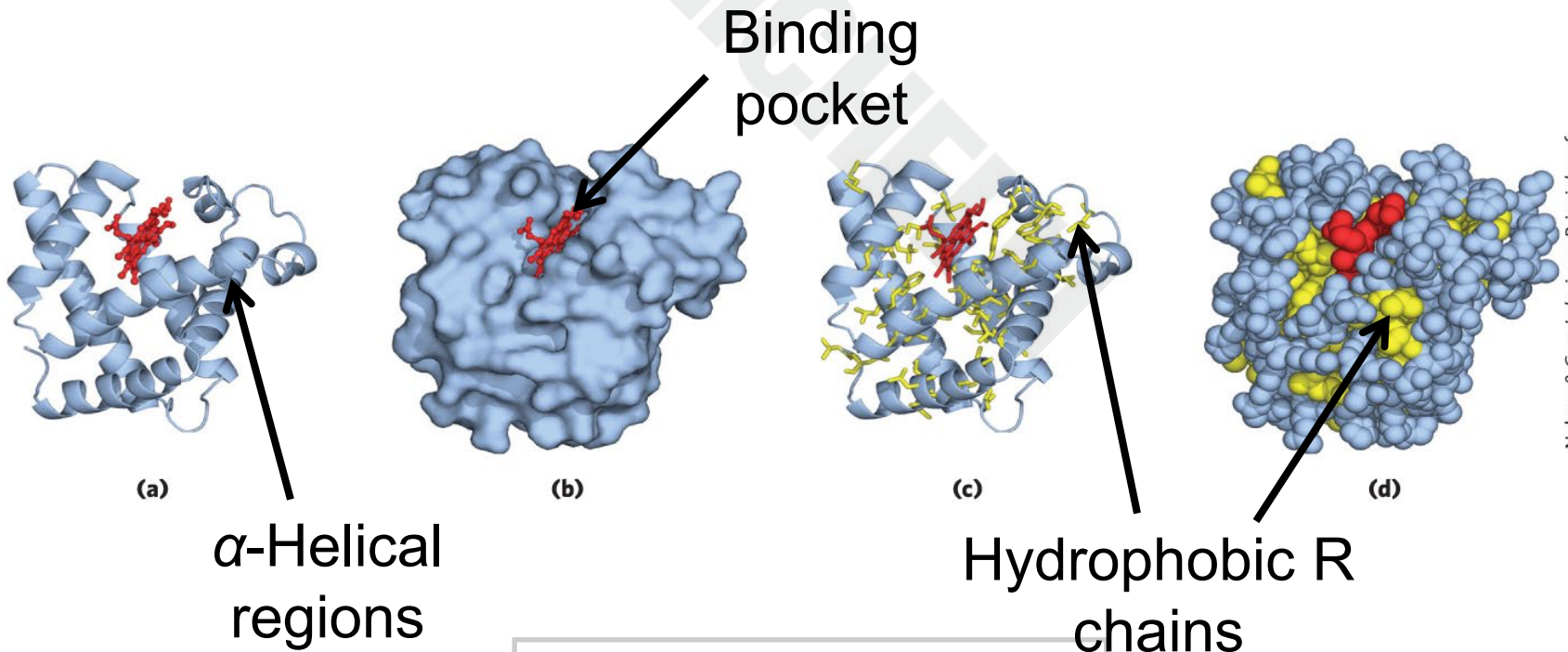
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The Protein Data Bank

- The **Protein Data Bank (PDB)**: www.rcsb.org
 - archive of experimentally determined three-dimensional structures
 - structures assigned an identifier called the PDB ID
 - PDB data files describe:
 - the spatial coordinates of each atom
 - information on how the structure was determined
 - information on its accuracy
 - structure visualization software can convert atomic coordinates to an image of the molecule

Myoglobin Provided Early Clues about the Complexity of Globular Protein Structure

- several structural representations of myoglobin's tertiary structure:



Globular Proteins Have a Variety of Tertiary Structures

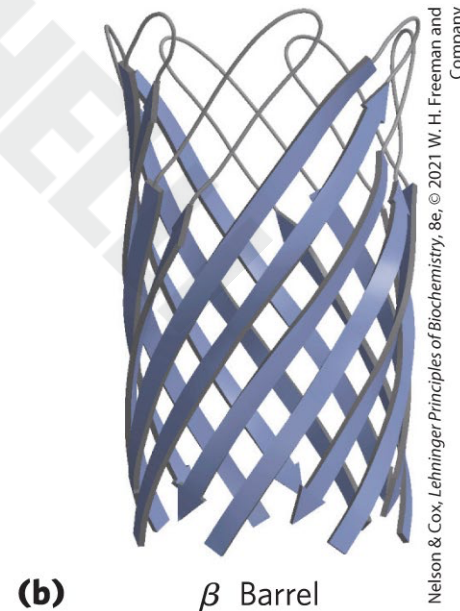
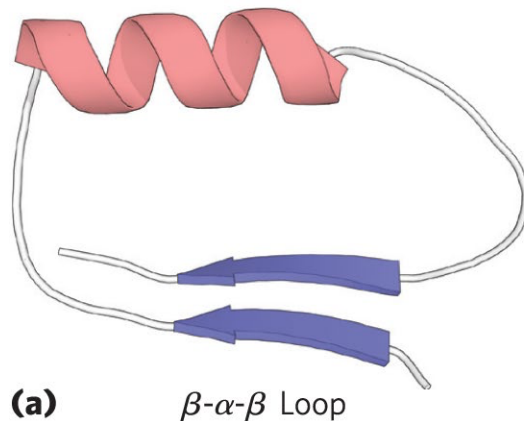
Table 4-3 Approximate Proportion of α Helix and β Conformation in Some Single-Chain Proteins

Protein (total residues)	Residues (%): α Helix	Residues (%): β Conformation
Chymotrypsin (247)	14	45
Ribonuclease (124)	26	35
Carboxypeptidase (307)	38	17
Cytochrome c (104)	39	0
Lysozyme (129)	40	12
Myoglobin (153)	78	0

- each globular protein has a distinct structure, adapted for its biological function

Folding Patterns of Proteins

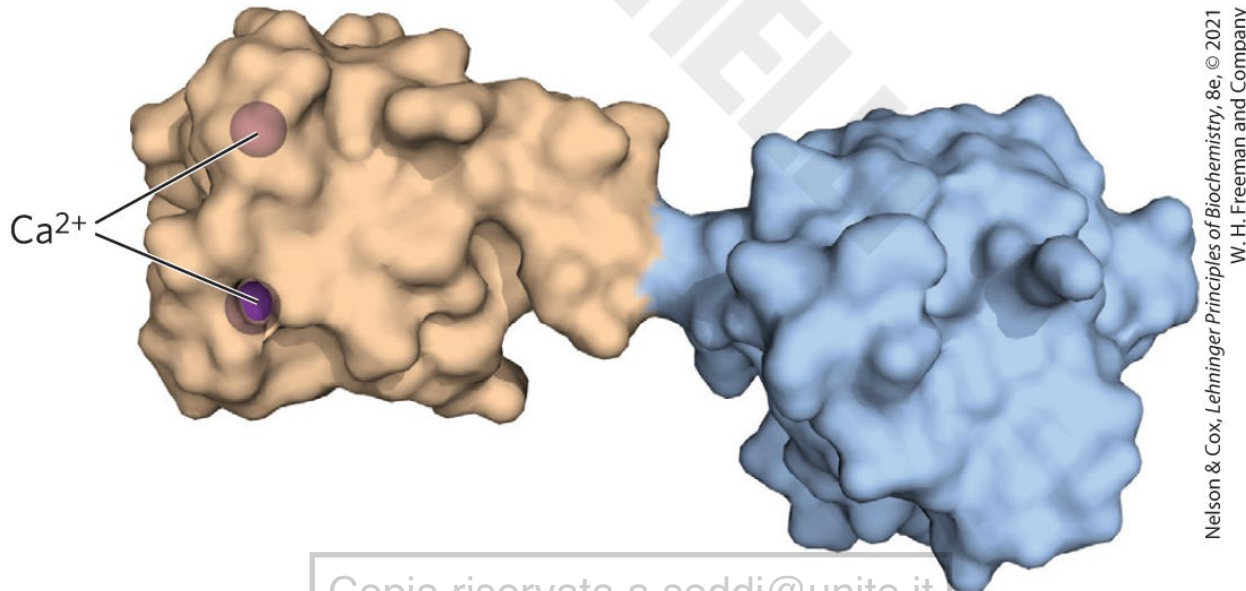
- **motif = fold** = recognizable folding pattern involving 2+ elements of secondary structures and the connection(s)
 - can be simple, such as in a **β - α - β loop**
 - can be elaborate, such as in a **β barrel**



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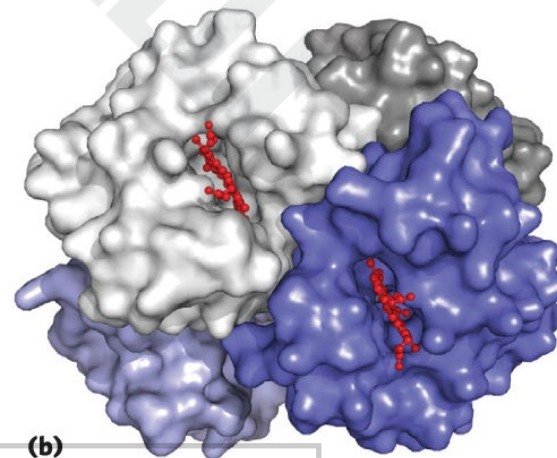
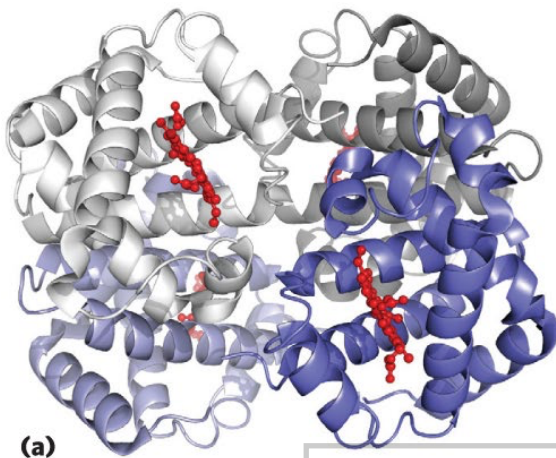
Protein Domains

- **domain** = part of a polypeptide chain that is independently stable or could undergo movements as a single entity
 - domains may appear as distinct or be difficult to discern
 - small proteins usually have only one domain



Protein Quaternary Structures Range from Simple Dimers to Large Complexes

- quaternary structure = assembly of multiple peptide subunits
- **oligomer = multimer** = multisubunit protein
 - repeating structural unit = **protomer**



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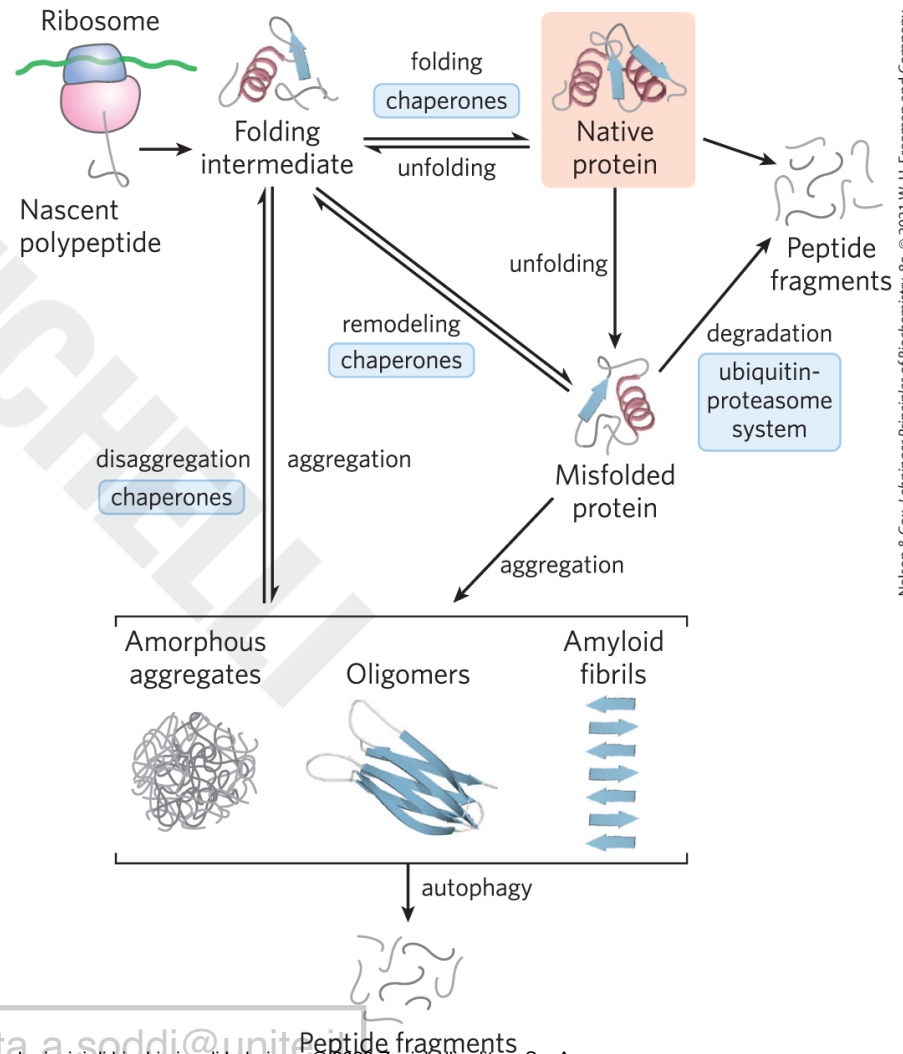
4.4 Protein Denaturation and Folding

Principle 4 (2 of 2)

Tertiary structure is determined by amino acid sequence. Even though protein folding is complex, some denatured proteins can spontaneously refold into their active conformation based only on the chemical properties of their constituent amino acids. Cellular proteostasis involves numerous pathways that regulate the folding, unfolding, and degradation of proteins. Many human diseases arise from protein misfolding and defects in proteostasis.

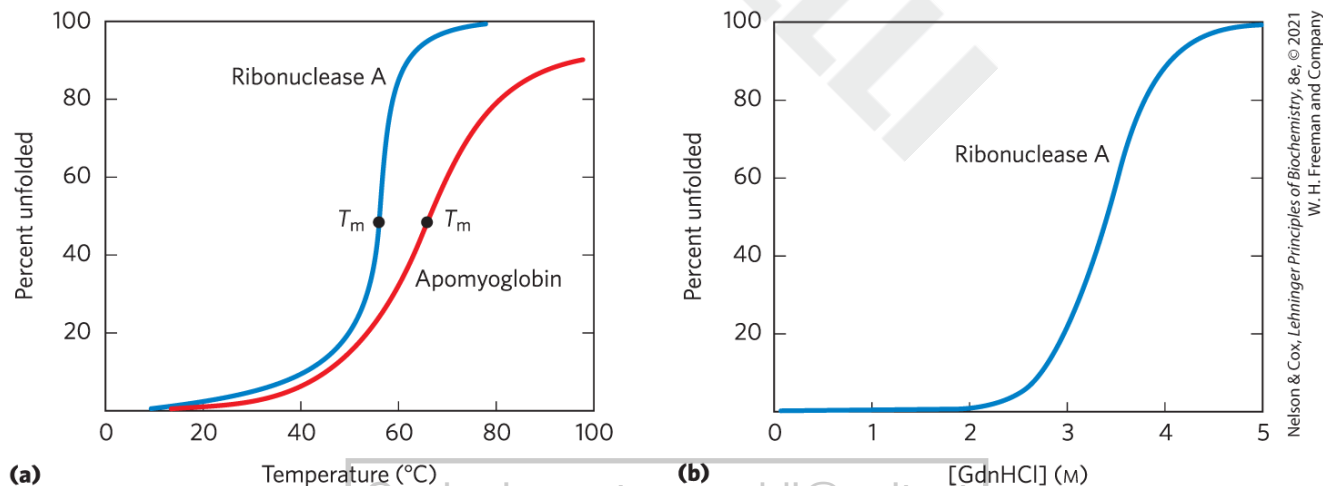
Pathways Involved in Proteostasis

- **proteostasis** = continual maintenance of the active set of cellular proteins required under a given set of conditions



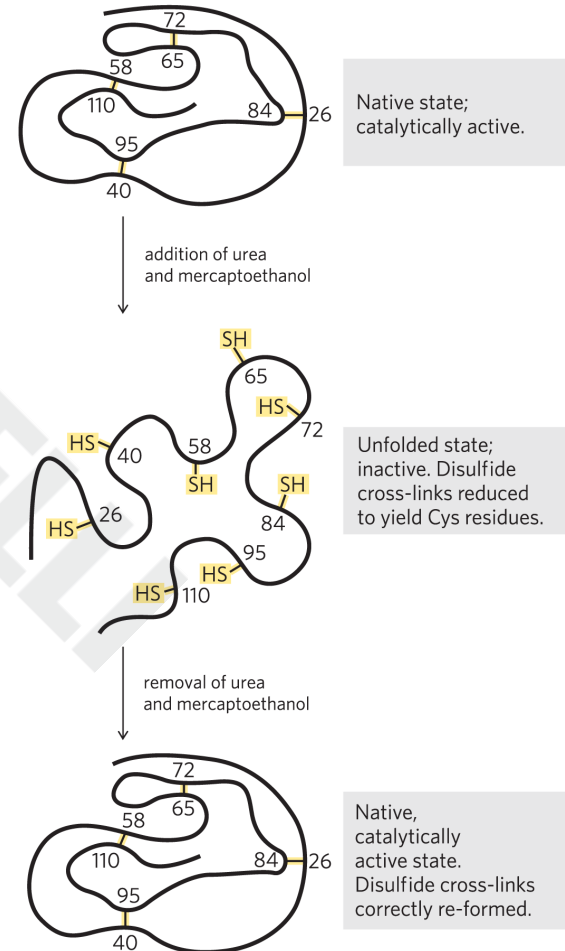
Loss of Protein Structure Results in Loss of Function

- **denaturation** = loss of three-dimensional structure sufficient to cause loss of function
 - can occur by heat, pH extremes, miscible organic solvents, certain solutes, detergents
 - often leads to protein precipitation



Amino Acid Sequence Determines Tertiary Structure

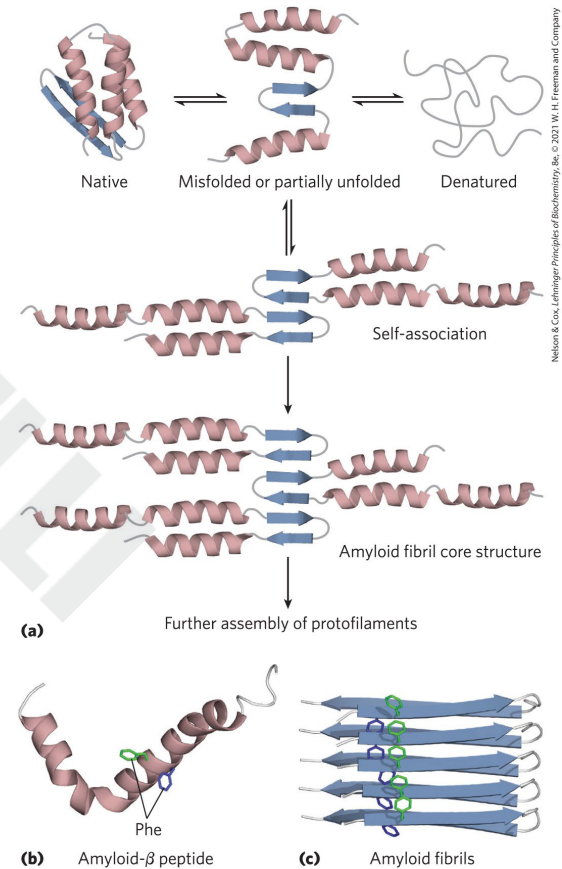
- **renaturation** = process by which certain denatured globular proteins regain their native structure and biological activity
- Anfinsen experiment showed the amino acid sequence contains all the information required to fold the chain



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Formation of Disease-Causing Amyloid Fibrils

- native = high degree of β -sheet structure
- misfolded β amyloid promotes aggregation, forming an amyloid fibril



Neurodegenerative Conditions

- Alzheimer disease = associated with extracellular amyloid deposition by neurons, involving the amyloid- β peptide
- Parkinson disease = misfolded form α -synuclein aggregates into spherical filamentous masses called Lewy bodies
- Huntington disease = involves the intracellular aggregation of huntingtin, a protein with long polyglutamine repeat