

# Major Mycotoxins in Various Food Matrices by LC-MS/MS

Shun-Hsin Liang, Jamie York, Joe Konschnik, Hansjoerg Majer, Justin Steimling; Restek Corporation

## Abstract & Introduction

Various food commodities are vulnerable to different types of fungal pathogens and could be contaminated with differential classes of mycotoxins as a result. It is ideally to implement a generic method for simultaneous determination of multi-mycotoxins in different food matrices or agricultural products. In this study, a simplified sample preparation procedure and a reliable LC-MS/MS analytical method was developed for comprehensive measurement of 38 regulated and emerging mycotoxins including 5 *Alternaria* toxins, 6 major ergot alkaloids and their corresponding epimers. Four different food matrices (baby wheat cereal, peanut, tomato puree, and blended flour) were chosen for method validation to demonstrate the applicability of this analytical method to a wide range of food types. Sample extraction was performed using a formic acid-acidified 80:20 acetonitrile:water solution followed by extract dry-down and reconstitution in a 50:50 water:methanol solution for injection analysis on a Biphenyl LC column. Chromatographic analysis was performed using LC-MS friendly acidic mobile phases and completed with a short 11-minute cycling time for proper separation of ergot alkaloid epimers. Accurate quantification was achieved using matrix-matched calibration standards at the range of 0.4 to 400 µg/kg. The recoveries of all mycotoxins (except citrinin) in fortified samples were from 70% to 120%, and the relative standard deviation (RSD) was less than 20%. For the vast majority of analytes, the limit of quantification was at 0.4 µg/kg which was satisfactory to meet the regulatory levels.

## Methods

**Table 1: Analytical Conditions (Waters Xevo TQ-S with Acquity UPLC)**

<b>Analytical Column</b>	Raptor Biphenyl 2.7µm 100 mm x 2.1 mm (Restek Cat.# 9309A12)	
<b>Guard Column</b>	Raptor Biphenyl EXP Guard Column Cartridge 2.7µm, 5 mm x 2.1 mm (Cat.# 9309A0252)	
<b>Mobile Phase A</b>	0.05% formic acid in water	
<b>Mobile Phase B</b>	0.05% formic acid in methanol	
<b>Gradient</b>	<b>Time (min)</b>	<b>%B</b>
	0.00	25
	5.00	50
	9.00	100
	9.01	25
	11.00	25
<b>Flow Rate</b>	0.4 mL/min	
<b>Injection Volume</b>	5 µL	
<b>Column Temp.</b>	60°C	
<b>Ion Mode</b>	Scheduled MRM in positive ESI	

## Food Products

Baby wheat cereal, raw peanut, tomato puree, and flours were purchased from local grocery stores. Baby wheat cereal and tomato puree were used as their original forms. Raw peanut was grinded and stored in the refrigerator. A blended flour was prepared by mixing white rice flour (75%), brown rice flour (5%), millet flour (5%), oat flour (5%), all-purpose wheat flour (5%), and all-purpose gluten free flour (5%) with a handheld blender.

## Conclusions

A workflow was established in this study to provide a unique solution for simultaneous determination of *Alternaria* toxins, ergot alkaloid epimers, and other major mycotoxins produced by fungal genus of *Aspergillus*, *Fusarium*, and *Penicillium*. The reported method was rugged, accurate, and precise using a combination of convenient sample preparation procedure and a fast 11-minute chromatographic analysis. Most importantly, this solution could be applied to multi-mycotoxin quantification in a wide variety of food products.

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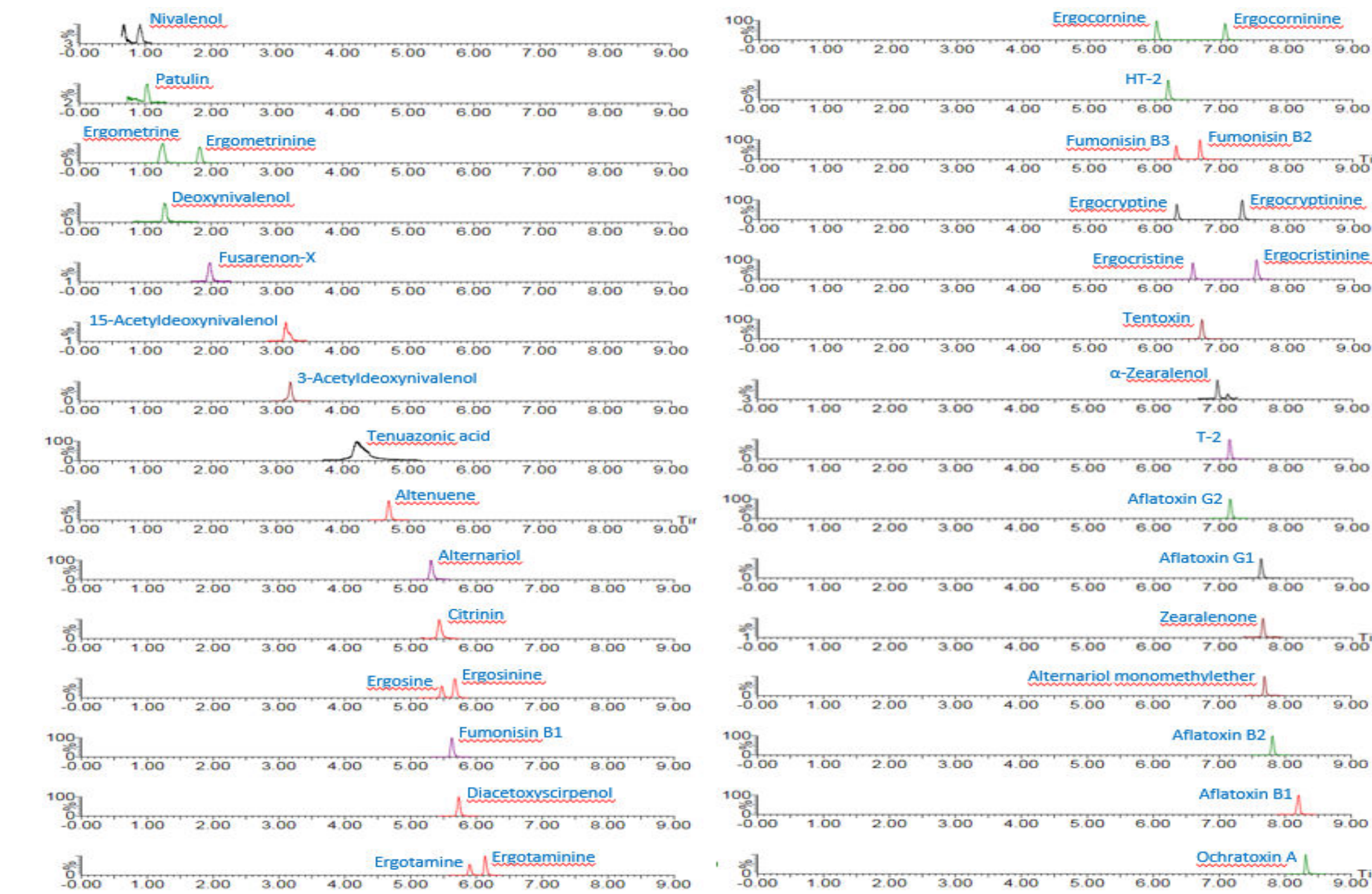
## Sample and Matrix-Matched Standards Preparation

Two grams of the sample were weighed into a 50-mL polypropylene centrifuge tube and fortified at 5, 50, and 200 µg/kg with stock standard solution. After sitting at room temperature for 10 minutes, 16 mL of extraction solution containing 0.5% formic acid (no formic acid for tomato puree) were added and the tube was stirred to gain homogenous suspension. The extraction was carried out by shaking horizontally on a digital pulse mixer (Glas-Col LLC, Terre Haute, IN) at 800 rpm for 20 minutes. After centrifuging for 5 minutes at 4000 rpm, 1 mL of extract was evaporated to dryness at 45°C under a gentle stream of nitrogen. The dried extract was reconstituted with 1 mL of 50:50 water:methanol solution and a 0.4 mL aliquot was transferred to and filtered using a Thomson SINGLE STEP filter vial with a 0.2 µm PTFE filter (Restek Cat.# 25874). To prepare matrix-matched calibration standards, the non-fortified matrices were extracted and dried down as described for the sample preparation procedure followed by reconstitution in 50:50 water/methanol solution containing 0.05 – 50 ng/mL of analytes which equals to 0.4 – 400 µg/kg of sample concentration.

## Results & Discussion

- (1) **Chromatographic Performance:** A fast chromatographic method using the Raptor Biphenyl column was established (see **Table 1**) for simultaneous analysis of 38 mycotoxins with a 11-minute total cycling time (**Figure 1**). Analytes were detected with ESI+ and the MRMs were shown in **Table 2**. All epimer pairs of ergot alkaloids were chromatographically separated for definitive and accurate quantification. It was noted that whenever a new Biphenyl column was used, it would need to be rinsed and maintained under the mobile phase overnight to gain an acceptable and quantifiable peak shape for tenuazonic acid.
- (2) **Linearity:** It was shown that a consistent and most suitable linearity of all analytes could be obtained with a quadratic regression ( $1/x$  weighted). The lowest concentrated standards were varied due to the differential MS ionization of analytes and specific matrix effect of different food matrices. Nevertheless, most analytes were quantifiable at the full range of 0.4 – 400  $\mu\text{g/kg}$  and all compounds showed proper linearity with  $r^2 > 0.997$  and deviations  $< 30\%$  (**Table 3**).
- (3) **Accuracy & Precision:** For each food sample, 3 batches of analyses were performed on different days with a total of 9 repetition of each fortified level. The average recovery and relative standard deviation (RSD) were shown in **Table 4**. Except citrinin in solid samples, all analytes had the recovery of 72 – 112% of for 3 fortification levels among 4 different types of food matrices. The satisfactory method precision was demonstrated with the %RSD of within 0.5 – 12%. For solid samples, the use of formic acid-containing extraction solution was necessary to obtain adequate recovery for fumonisin Bs but resulted in low recovery (24 – 36%) of citrinin. For food with high water content such as tomato puree, acceptable recovery of both fumonisin Bs (90 – 94%) and citrinin (72 – 77%) were achievable without the addition of formic acid. Due to specific matrix interference, nivalenol could not be measured in baby wheat cereal. The negative impact of matrix interference could also be observed for deoxynivalenol, fusarenon X, and patulin for tomato puree analysis in which the 5  $\mu\text{g/kg}$  fortification sample was not quantifiable.
- Table 3: Calibration Ranges**

**Figure 1: Chromatogram of Fortified Blended Flour at 50 µg/kg**



### Table 3: Calibration Ranges

Compound	Baby Wheat Cereal		Peanut		Tomato Puree		Blended Flour	
	Linear Range ( $\mu\text{g/kg}$ )	$r^2$	Linear Range ( $\mu\text{g/kg}$ )	$r^2$	Linear Range ( $\mu\text{g/kg}$ )	$r^2$	Linear Range ( $\mu\text{g/kg}$ )	$r^2$
Aflatoxin B1	0.4 - 400	0.9996	0.4 - 400	0.9998	0.4 - 400	0.9995	0.4 - 400	0.9998
Aflatoxin B2	0.4 - 400	0.9997	0.4 - 400	0.9998	0.4 - 400	0.9996	0.4 - 400	1.000
Aflatoxin G1	0.4 - 400	0.9999	0.4 - 400	0.9997	0.4 - 400	0.9979	0.4 - 400	1.000
Aflatoxin G2	0.4 - 400	0.9997	0.4 - 400	0.9998	0.4 - 400	0.9993	0.4 - 400	0.9998
Ochratoxin	0.4 - 400	0.9998	0.4 - 400	0.9993	0.4 - 400	0.9996	0.4 - 400	1.000
3-Acetyldeoxynivalenol	0.4 - 400	0.9994	2.0 - 400	0.997	4.0 - 400	0.9982	2.0 - 400	0.9998
Deoxynivalenol	2.0 - 400	0.9998	4.0 - 400	0.9994	8.0 - 400	0.9991	2.0 - 400	0.9995
Diacetoxyscipenol	0.8 - 400	0.9998	0.8 - 400	0.9995	0.8 - 400	0.9993	0.4 - 400	0.9998
Fumonisin B1	0.4 - 400	0.9999	0.4 - 400	0.9994	0.4 - 400	0.9999	0.4 - 400	0.9999
Fumonisin B2	0.4 - 400	0.9997	0.4 - 400	0.9997	0.4 - 400	0.9998	0.4 - 400	0.9999
Fumonisin B3	0.4 - 400	0.9999	0.4 - 400	0.9997	0.4 - 1.000	0.9997	0.4 - 400	0.9999
Fusarenon-X	4.0 - 400	0.9971	2.0 - 400	0.9971	8.0 - 400	0.9974	2.0 - 400	0.9995
HT-2	0.4 - 400	0.9999	0.4 - 400	0.997	0.4 - 400	0.9997	0.4 - 400	0.9999
Nivalenol	-	-	8.0 - 400	0.9990	20 - 400	0.9996	8.0 - 400	0.9997
T-2	0.4 - 400	0.9998	0.4 - 400	0.9998	0.4 - 400	0.9992	0.4 - 400	1.000
$\alpha$ -Zearalenol	4.0 - 400	0.9985	2.0 - 400	0.9992	2.0 - 400	0.9979	2.0 - 400	0.9994
Zearalenone	0.8 - 400	0.9998	0.8 - 400	0.9996	0.8 - 400	0.9995	2.0 - 400	0.9998
Cyristin	0.4 - 400	0.9996	0.4 - 400	0.9986	0.4 - 400	0.9984	0.4 - 400	0.9999
Patulin	4.0 - 400	0.9991	4.0 - 400	0.9995	8.0 - 400	0.9997	4.0 - 400	0.9993
Alternariol	0.4 - 400	0.9998	0.4 - 400	0.9990	0.4 - 400	0.9996	0.4 - 400	0.9997
Alternariol monomethylether	0.4 - 400	0.9996	0.4 - 400	0.9995	0.4 - 400	0.9992	0.4 - 400	0.9999
Altenuene	0.4 - 400	0.9999	0.4 - 400	0.9997	2.0 - 400	0.9999	0.4 - 400	1.000
Tenxinon	2.0 - 400	0.9998	0.4 - 400	0.9998	0.8 - 400	0.9998	0.8 - 400	0.9999
Tenuazonic acid	8.0 - 400	0.9994	2.0 - 400	0.9997	8.0 - 400	0.9987	8.0 - 400	0.9992
Ergocornine	0.4 - 400	0.9999	0.4 - 400	0.9998	0.4 - 400	0.9998	0.4 - 400	0.9999
Ergocristine	0.4 - 400	0.9998	0.4 - 400	0.9997	0.4 - 400	0.9996	0.4 - 400	0.9999
Ergocryptine	0.4 - 400	0.9998	0.4 - 400	0.9998	0.4 - 400	0.9997	0.4 - 400	1.000
Ergometrine	0.4 - 400	0.9998	0.4 - 400	0.9999	0.4 - 400	0.9973	0.4 - 400	0.9999
Ergometrinine	0.4 - 400	0.9997	0.4 - 400	0.9996	0.4 - 400	0.9993	0.4 - 400	0.9999
Ergosine	0.4 - 400	0.9995	0.4 - 400	0.9996	0.4 - 400	0.9996	0.4 - 400	0.9999
Ergosinine	0.4 - 400	0.9999	0.4 - 400	0.9997	0.4 - 400	0.9998	0.4 - 400	0.9997
Ergotamine	0.4 - 400	0.9998	0.4 - 400	0.9998	0.4 - 400	0.9995	0.4 - 400	0.9999
Ergotaminine	0.4 - 400	0.9999	0.4 - 400	0.9997	0.4 - 400	0.9998	0.4 - 400	0.9998

#### Table 4: Recovery & Precision

Table 2: MS Transition and Retention Time

Compounds	Retention time (min)	Precursor Ion	Product ion 1		Product ion 2		Concentration, µg/kg	Baby Wheat Cereal			Peanut			Tomato Puree			Blended Flour		
			5	50	200	5		50	200	5	50	200	5	50	200				
Aflatoxin B1	8.20	313.2 [M+H] <sup>+</sup>	241.1	284.9															
Aflatoxin B2	7.81	315.1 [M+H] <sup>+</sup>	287.0	259.0															
Aflatoxin G1	7.62	329.1 [M+H] <sup>+</sup>	199.7	243.0															
Aflatoxin G2	7.15	331.2 [M+H] <sup>+</sup>	189.0	313.0															
Ochratoxin A	8.31	404.1 [M+H] <sup>+</sup>	239.0	358.0															
3-Acetyldeoxynivalenol	3.21	339.2 [M+H] <sup>+</sup>	213.1	231.1															
15-Acetyldeoxynivalenol	3.14	339.2 [M+H] <sup>+</sup>	137.1	321.2															
Deoxynivalenol	3.30	297.2 [M+H] <sup>+</sup>	231.0	249.0															
Diacetoxyscirpenol	5.73	384.2 [M+H] <sup>+</sup>	247.1	307.2															
Fumonisin B1	5.63	722.5 [M+H] <sup>+</sup>	352.3	334.3															
Fumonisin B2	6.68	706.4 [M+H] <sup>+</sup>	336.2	318.2															
Fumonisin B3	6.32	706.4 [M+H] <sup>+</sup>	336.2	318.3															
Fusarenol-X	1.98	355.1 [M+H] <sup>+</sup>	137.1	247.1															
HT-2	6.20	447.2 [M+Na] <sup>+</sup>	285.1																
Nivalenol	0.92	295.2 [M+H, O] <sup>+</sup>	137.1	91.0															
T-2	7.14	489.2 [M+Na] <sup>+</sup>	387.1	245.1															
α-Zearalenol	6.96	303.1 [M+H, O] <sup>+</sup>	285.1	175.0															
Zearalenone	7.65	319.2 [M+H] <sup>+</sup>	283.1	283.0															
Citrinin	5.43	251.2 [M+H] <sup>+</sup>	233.1	205.1															
Patulin	1.03	155.0 [M+H] <sup>+</sup>	99.0	81.0															
Alternariol	5.30	259.0 [M+H] <sup>+</sup>	185.1	130.0															
Alternariol monomethylether	7.69	273.0 [M+H] <sup>+</sup>	199.1	128.0															
Altenuene	4.70	293.2 [M+H] <sup>+</sup>	257.1	275.2															
Tenoxin	6.70	415.2 [M+H] <sup>+</sup>	312.2	302.2															
Tenuazonic acid	4.22	198.1 [M+H] <sup>+</sup>	125.0	153.1															
Ergocornine	6.03	562.4 [M+H] <sup>+</sup>	268.2	223.2															
Ergocornimine	7.07	562.4 [M+H] <sup>+</sup>	268.2	223.2															
Ergocristine	6.56	610.4 [M+H] <sup>+</sup>	223.2	592.4															
Ergocristine	7.53	576.4 [M+H] <sup>+</sup>	223.2																
Ergocryptine	6.32	576.4 [M+H] <sup>+</sup>	268.2	223.2															
Ergocryptinine	7.31	576.4 [M+H] <sup>+</sup>	268.2	223.2															
Ergometrine	1.27	326.2 [M+H] <sup>+</sup>	223.2	208.1															
Ergometrine	1.83	326.2 [M+H] <sup>+</sup>	223.2	208.0															
Ergosine	5.47	548.4 [M+H] <sup>+</sup>	208.1	223.2															
Ergosinine	5.67	548.4 [M+H] <sup>+</sup>	208.1	223.2															
Ergotamine	5.90	582.4 [M+H] <sup>+</sup>	223.2	268.2															
Ergotaminine	6.13	582.4 [M+H] <sup>+</sup>	223.2	268.2															