

Protocol for preparation and loading of easYmers® MHC I-peptide monomer onto U-Load Dextramer®

Background

easYmers® powered by immunAware is a formulation of peptide-receptive MHC I monomer, which can be used to generate specific MHC-peptide monomer by loading your peptide of choice. The easYmers® MHC I-peptide monomer can easily be loaded onto fluorescently labeled U-Load Dextramer® and used to detect antigen-specific CD8⁺ T cells using flow cytometry. Optionally, the peptide-loaded easYmers® can be stored frozen at -20°C for later use. The easYmers® technology is highly flexible and suitable for screening a single epitope in many samples or screening a large number of different epitopes in parallel. The easYmers® technology also allows evaluation of peptide binding to MHC I by assaying proper refolding of peptide-loaded easYmers® monomer.

Materials required

The materials listed here are required for preparation of MHC I-peptide monomer and U-Load Dextramer® MHC I.

easYmers®
easYmers® loading buffer
easYmers® positive control peptide
U-Load Dextramer®
U-Load Dextramer® dilution buffer

Materials required (not provided)

The materials listed here are required for preparation of MHC I-peptide monomer and U-Load Dextramer® MHC I and for the flow cytometry-based assay for evaluation of proper folding of easYmers® MHC I-peptide monomer.

Peptide of choice
DMSO (e.g., Sigma cat.# D2650)
Dilution buffer (PBS, 5% glycerol)
FACS buffer (PBS, 1% BSA (or FCS), 0.01% NaN₃)
Streptavidin-coated beads (Spherotech cat.# SVP-60-5)
Anti-human β_2m BBM.1-PE (Santa Cruz cat.# sc-13565 PE)

Protocol steps and timing

Experimental workflow using the easYmers® and U-Load Dextramer® and estimated time to complete each step.



I. Preparation of easYmers® MHC I-peptide monomer

1. Reconstitute your peptides of interest according to the manufacturer's instructions.
2. Dilute Peptide (easYmers® control peptide or peptide of interest) to 100 μM in ddH₂O. Keep on ice from this step on.
3. To prepare easYmers® MHC I-peptide monomer, mix the reagents in Table A according to the listed sequence in a 1.5 mL tube or 96-well U-bottom plate. The listed amounts will be enough to make 10, 20, or 50 tests of U-Load Dextramer® MHC I.

Optional: To evaluate the peptide loading efficiency make a smaller volume of the easYmers® positive and the negative control (no peptide), i.e., easYmers® loaded with the included easYmers® positive control peptide or no peptide as listed in Table A.

Table A

Reagents	10 tests	20 tests	50 tests	Positive Control	Negative control
ddH ₂ O	26.5 μL	53 μL	132.5 μL	2.5 μL	3 μL
Peptide (100 μM)	3.5 μL	7 μL	17.5 μL	0.5 μL	-
easYmers® Loading Buffer	10 μL	20 μL	50 μL	3 μL	3 μL
easYmers® (3 μM)	20 μL	40 μL	100 μL	3 μL	3 μL
Total volume of easYmers® MHC I-peptide monomer (1 μM)	60 μL	120 μL	300 μL	9 μL	9 μL

4. Mix by pipetting gently – *be careful not to form bubbles.*
5. Briefly centrifuge to collect all materials in the bottom of the tube and incubate at 18°C for 48 h.
6. Briefly centrifuge to collect all material in the bottom of the tube. 1 μM folded easYmers® MHC I-peptide monomer are now ready for loading onto U-Load Dextramer® or can be stored at -20°C for long-term storage.
7. Proceed to page 4 to evaluate peptide-loading efficiency or continue to load onto U-Load Dextramer®.

II. Loading of U-Load Dextramer®

8. To load the easYmers® MHC I-peptide monomer onto U-Load Dextramer®, mix the reagents in Table B in a 1.5 mL tube: *U-Load Dextramer® APC require different volume of reagents. See Procedural notes.*

Table B

Reagents	10 tests	20 tests	50 tests
easYmers [®] MHC I-peptide monomer (1 μM)	57 μL	114 μL	285 μL
U-Load Dextramer [®] (PE/FITC)	20 μL	40 μL	100 μL
<i>incubate for 30 min at RT in the dark</i>			
U-Load Dextramer [®] Dilution Buffer	23 μL	46 μL	115 μL
Total volume U-Load Dextramer[®] MHC I	100 μL	200 μL	500 μL

9. Store the fluorescent U-Load Dextramer[®] MHC I reagents at 2-8°C in the dark until use.

III. Staining procedure

1. To analyze antigen-specific CD8⁺ T cells in blood using flow cytometry for one or more specificities using U-Load Dextramer[®] MHC I, see www.immudex.com/Protocols/mhc-dextramer-staining-protocol

Procedural notes

1. Protocol step 8: To assemble the peptide-loaded easYmers[®] with U-Load Dextramer[®] APC, mix the reagents in Table C in a 1.5 mL tube:

Table C

Reagents	10 tests	20 tests	50 tests
easYmers [®] MHC I-peptide monomer (1 μM)	38 μL	76 μL	190 μL
U-Load Dextramer [®] (APC)	20 μL	40 μL	100 μL
<i>incubate for 30 min at RT in the dark</i>			
U-Load Dextramer [®] Dilution Buffer	42 μL	84 μL	210 μL
Total volume U-Load Dextramer[®] MHC I	100 μL	200 μL	500 μL

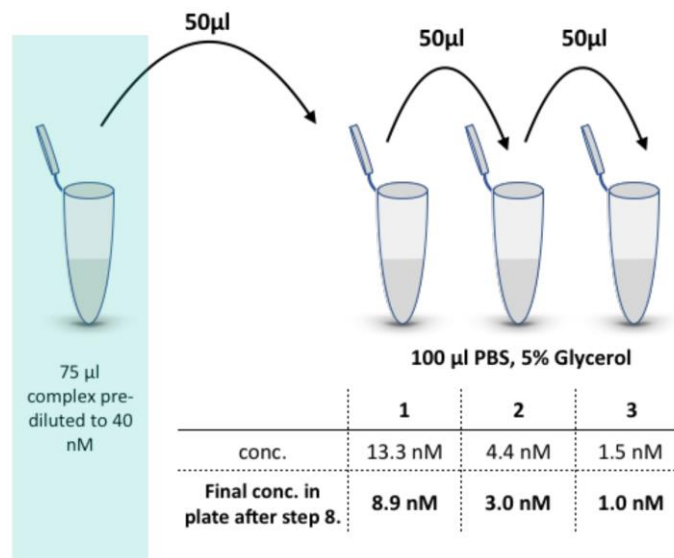
Optional: Flow cytometry-based quality control assay for determination of peptide loading efficiency

Background

After easYmers[®] MHC I-peptide monomerization (step 6 in the protocol), the relative peptide loading efficiency can be determined by comparing your peptide of interest to the negative and positive loading controls using this assay. The negative loading control is empty easYmers[®] (no peptide). The positive loading control peptide is specific to and provided with the easYmers[®] you purchase. If this is your first time testing a particular easYmers[®] MHC I-peptide combination, this assay is highly recommended.

Procedure: evaluation of easYmers[®] MHC I-peptide monomer formation

1. Prepare a sufficient volume of dilution buffer (PBS, 5% glycerol).
2. To determine the efficiency of the easYmers[®] MHC I-peptide folding take 3 μL of the prepared easYmers[®] MHC I-peptide monomer (1 μM) and dilute to 500 nM by adding 3 μL of dilution buffer.
3. Dilute each of the easYmers[®] MHC I-peptide monomer to give 75 μL of a 40 nM solution (e.g., for a 500 nM monomer: 6 μL folded monomer in 69 μL dilution buffer).
4. For all samples and positive and negative loading controls, transfer 50 μL of this pre-dilution (prepared in step 3) to the first tube. Make three subsequent serial 3-fold dilutions (50 μL in 100 μL dilution buffer), according to the figure below.



5. Transfer 40 μL of each of these dilutions to the wells in a U-bottom shape 96-well plate, as suggested below. Also, prepare a background well (BLANK): 40 μL of dilution buffer (no beads or antibody will be added to this well).
6. Prepare a sufficient volume of a 45-fold dilution of the streptavidin-coated beads in dilution buffer. Transfer 20 μL of the diluted bead suspension to each well.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
A	BLANK		P-1		S1-1		S3-1		S5-1		S7-1	
B			P-2		S1-2		S3-2		S5-2		S7-2	
C			P-3		S1-3		S3-3		S5-3		S7-3	
D												
E			N-1		S2-1		S4-1		S6-1		S8-1	
F			N-2		S2-2		S4-2		S6-2		S8-2	
G			N-3		S2-3		S4-3		S6-3		S8-3	
H												

BLANK : No complex

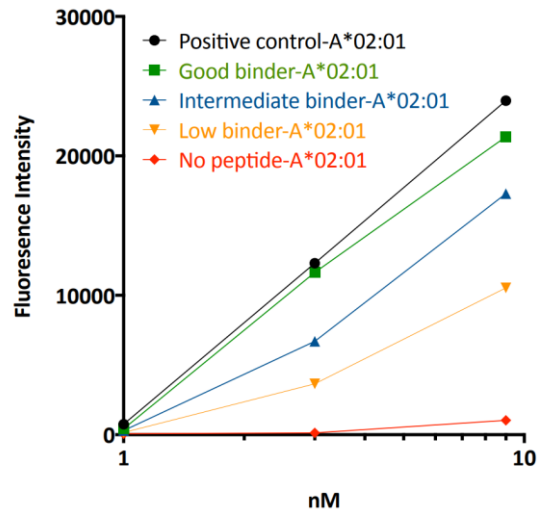
P1-3 : Positive control dilutions (HLA with know peptide)

N1-3 : Negative control dilutions (HLA without peptide)

S1-S8 : Sample dilutions (complexes to evaluate)

7. Mix well and seal the plates with sealing tape to avoid well to well contamination.
8. Incubate the plate on a rocking table at 37°C for 1 h.
9. Remove the sealing tape and wash by adding 160 µL FACS buffer.
10. Spin the plate at 700 x g for 3 min and discard the supernatant.
11. Resuspend the beads in 200 µL FACS buffer.
12. Spin the plate at 700 x g for 3 min and discard the supernatant.
13. Wash two more times by repeating step 10 and 12.
14. During the above washing steps, prepare a 200-fold dilution of the PE-labeled anti-human β2m monoclonal antibody BBM.1 in FACS buffer.
15. Resuspend the beads in 50 µL antibody solution per well.
16. Incubate the plate for 30 min at 4°C.
17. Wash by adding 150 µL FACS buffer. Spin the plate at 700 x g for 3 min and discard the supernatant.
18. Resuspend the beads in 200 µL FACS buffer. Spin the plate at 700 x g for 3 min and discard the supernatant.
19. Wash two more times by repeating step 17 and 18.
20. Resuspend the beads in 200 µL FACS buffer and analyze on a Flow cytometer.

Example of the Flow cytometry-based assay:



Flow cytometry-based detection of four different peptide-HLA-A*0201 monomers. MHC I-peptide monomer of A*0201 and 4 different peptides, and a negative control (no peptide), were folded. CMV pp65 495-503 (NLVPMVATV) a known HLA-A*0201 restricted epitope was used as positive control. The three other peptides are based on their A*0201 binding stability categorized as good binder ($T_{1/2}$ 6.5 h), intermediate binder ($T_{1/2}$ 3.5 h), and low binder ($T_{1/2}$ 0.7 h). Three dilutions of the folded monomer were analyzed in the flow cytometry-based assay. The X-axis gives the monomer concentration if complete folding is achieved.