Toxic effects of the interaction of titanium dioxide nanoparticles with chemicals or physical factors

Kui Liu
Xialu Lin
Jinshun Zhao

Public Health Department of Medical School, Zhejiang Provincial Key Laboratory of Pathological and Physiological Technology, Ningbo University, Ningbo, Zhejiang Province, People’s Republic of China

Abstract: Due to their chemical stability and nonallergic, nonirritant, and ultraviolet protective properties, titanium dioxide (TiO$_2$) nanoparticles (NPs) have been widely used in industries such as electronics, optics, and material sciences, as well as architecture, medicine, and pharmacology. However, increasing concerns have been raised in regards to its ecotoxicity and toxicity on the aquatic environment as well as to humans. Although insights have been gained into the effects of TiO$_2$ NPs on susceptible biological systems, there is still much ground to be covered, particularly in respect of our knowledge of the effects of the interaction of TiO$_2$ NPs with other chemicals or physical factors. Studies suggest that interactions of TiO$_2$ NPs with other chemicals or physical factors may result in an increase in toxicity or adverse effects. This review highlights recent progress in the study of the interactive effects of TiO$_2$ NPs with other chemicals or physical factors.

Keywords: titanium dioxide, TiO$_2$, nanoparticles, interaction, chemicals, physical factors

Introduction

Nanoparticles (NPs) are raw materials used in nanotechnology, with a size range of 1–100 nm in no less than one of their three dimensions. TiO$_2$ NPs consists of three polymorphs, including anatase, rutile, and brookite. TiO$_2$ NPs have been widely used in many products, such as toothpastes, sunscreens, cosmetics, food products, pharmaceuticals, and nanomedical reagents. TiO$_2$ particles have been considered as nontoxic mineral particles and traditionally used in the fields of cosmetics, food, and drugs. They were even used as “dust negative control” in many in vitro and in vivo toxicological investigations for many years. However, research evidence suggests that TiO$_2$ NPs may possess higher toxicity potential than their bulk materials. Zhao et al found that TiO$_2$ NPs caused higher cytotoxicity than fine particles in cell culture. Due to their very small size, NPs can penetrate basic biological structures, which may, in turn, disrupt their normal function. Recent research evidence shows that TiO$_2$ NPs may induce cellular toxicity effects in cardiac tissue. The toxicity effects of TiO$_2$ particles were also observed in cells of the circulatory system. Li et al found that the erythrocytes treated with TiO$_2$ NPs underwent abnormal sedimentation, hemagglutination, and hemolysis, which were totally different from those treated with TiO$_2$ fine particles. Lung tumors were also found in rats after lifetime exposure to high concentrations of TiO$_2$ particles. Moreover, a recent study showed oxidative stress in mice brain as well as overproliferation of all glial cells. These occurred in mice that were exposed to 2.5 mg/kg, 5 mg/kg, and 10 mg/kg body weight TiO$_2$ NPs through nasal administration for 90 days. The toxicokinetics (Figure 1) and toxic effects of...
TiO$_2$ NPs\textsuperscript{13–15} alone have been well documented in many in vivo and in vitro studies, but reviews of the effects (or toxicities) of the interaction of TiO$_2$ NPs with other chemicals or physical factors are currently unavailable. TiO$_2$ NPs may coexist with other chemicals or physical factors in the surrounding environment and occupational settings. In the field of nanomedicine, TiO$_2$ NPs are being used as drug carriers.\textsuperscript{3} Therefore, evaluating the interactive effects of TiO$_2$ NPs with other chemicals or physical factors is vital for the safe application of TiO$_2$ NPs. This review will mainly focus on the current knowledge concerning the effects of the interaction of TiO$_2$ NPs with other chemicals or physical factors and will identify areas where further improvement is needed.

**Effects of TiO$_2$ NP interaction with metals and their compounds**

With growing applications, TiO$_2$ NPs are rapidly entering the aquatic environment,\textsuperscript{16} and thus the aquatic environment is expected ultimately to be a sink for the sedimentation of these NPs. Consequently, these NPs will inevitably mix and interact with other aquatic pollutants, including metals and their compounds.\textsuperscript{17} In addition, NPs have been found to be capable of absorbing and separating metals from aqueous or organic solutions.\textsuperscript{18,19}

TiO$_2$ NPs have been tested as a sorbent in the solid-phase extraction for preconcentrated lead (Pb) in river water and seawater.\textsuperscript{20–22} Zhang et al\textsuperscript{20} investigated the potential acute toxicity of the interaction between TiO$_2$ NPs (50 nm and 120 nm) and lead acetate (PbAC) in mice. Suspensions of TiO$_2$ NPs (5 g/kg body weight) alone, PbAC (500 mg/kg) alone, and TiO$_2$ NPs (5 g/kg) plus PbAC (500 mg/kg) were administered to mice via oral gavage, respectively. No synergistic acute toxicity in mice was found after treatment with the combination of TiO$_2$ NPs and PbAC. However, Du et al\textsuperscript{23} found that, compared with the control (1% dimethyl sulfoxide), mixtures of TiO$_2$ NPs of different doses (21 nm, 80% anatase, 20% rutile) plus PbAC (1 µg/mL) induced a significant increase in reactive oxygen species (ROS) generation (at 0.001 µg/mL, 0.01 µg/mL, 0.1 µg/mL, 1 µg/mL, and 10 µg/mL of TiO$_2$), intracellular superoxide dismutase (SOD) activity (at 0.1 µg/mL and

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**Figure 1** Toxicokinetics and accumulation sites of titanium dioxide nanoparticles.

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*Abbreviation:* GI, gastrointestinal.
0.01 µg/mL of TiO$_2$, glutathione (GSH) levels (at 0.01–1 µg/mL of TiO$_2$), 8-hydroxydeoxyguanosine levels (at 1 µg/mL and 10 µg/mL of TiO$_2$), 8-oxoguanine DNA glycosylase homologue 1 expression (at 0.001–1 µg/mL of TiO$_2$), and cytotoxicity (at 0.1 µg/mL, 1 µg/mL, and 10 µg/mL of TiO$_2$) in human embryo hepatocyte cells. These results suggest that interaction of TiO$_2$ NPs and PbAC may result in an increase of oxidative stress in culture cells.

Arsenic (As) is a metalloid. Chronic As exposure could cause cancer, neuropathies, and bronchopulmonary, cardiovascular, and metabolic diseases. To reduce As pollution, TiO$_2$ NPs have been used as photocatalytic oxidants and/or absorption materials to remove As from water, which implies an interaction between As and TiO$_2$ NPs. Due to their small diameter, large surface area, and the ability to uptake –OH ions from solution, TiO$_2$ NPs could adsorb metal ions through electrostatic interaction. Evidence shows that variables such as pH and temperature may affect the adsorption and/or desorption of As (III) and As (V) by TiO$_2$ NPs in the aqueous solution. 

Pena et al found that at 21°C–25°C and pH <8, TiO$_2$ NPs could be used to remove As (V) from solution through adsorption, but the maximum removal for As (III) occurred at about pH 7.5. Additionally, they demonstrated that the competing anions such as silicate, carbonate, and phosphate had a low effect on the adsorption capacities of TiO$_2$ NPs on As (III) and As (V) in a neutral pH range, which was in agreement with the results of Bang et al. Niu et al found that the adsorption of As (V) was more favored in acid solution at 25°C, whereas the uptake of As (III) was preferred in alkaline solution by TiO$_2$ NPs at 25°C. The maximum uptake of As (V) and As (III) was 208 mg/g (pH =3.0) and 60 mg/g (pH =7.0). Their experiments also suggested that more than 80% of As (III) and 95% of As (V) adsorbed on TiO$_2$ NPs could be desorbed with 1.0 M sodium hydroxide solution within 1 hour, as demonstrated by desorption tests, which was confirmed by Bang et al. 

Jegadeesan et al indicated that the capacity for sorption to As by TiO$_2$ NP polymorphs might be affected by sorption site density, surface area (particle size), and crystalline structure. Wang et al stated that As toxicity on Ceriodaphnia dubia might increase when TiO$_2$ NPs (5–10 nm) interact with As in the ecosystem. They found that TiO$_2$ NPs less than 400 mg/L alone were nontoxic. The 24-hour median lethal concentration (LC$_{50}$) of As alone on Ceriodaphnia dubia was 3.68±0.22 mg/L. In addition, the presence of low concentrations of 50 mg/L TiO$_2$ NPs increased the toxicity of As significantly, and the LC$_{50}$ of As was also lowered to 1.43 mg/L. In summary, available studies show that pH, temperature, composite method, and crystalline structure may all be important for the adsorption of As (III) and As (V) by TiO$_2$ NPs, and an alkaline environment is suitable for the desorption of As (III) and As (V). More studies are needed to investigate the toxicity effects after combination of As with TiO$_2$ NPs.

Copper (Cu) is an important element in human physiological processes. Exposure to low doses of Cu is harmless because Cu is an essential trace element for the human body. Adverse immunotoxicological effects on human health could be caused only by an overexposure to Cu. Overexposure, especially a sublethal dose exposure of Cu, could induce immunotoxicity in mice, including cell-cycle arrest and cell death in the spleen and thymus. Fan et al found that TiO$_2$ NPs (at a concentration generally considered to be safe in the environment) remarkably enhanced the toxicity of Cu on Daphnia magna by increasing the bioaccumulation of Cu. In addition, they found that the Cu was adsorbed on to the TiO$_2$ NPs when ingested and was accumulated in the animals, thereby causing an increase in toxic effects.

Cadmium (Cd) is one of the most toxic elements to which human beings may be exposed. Cd compounds are widely used in rechargeable nickel-Cd batteries. Cigarette smoke, polluted foods, and batteries are the major sources of Cd pollution. Xia et al investigated the combined toxicity of cadmium chloride (CdCl$_2$) and TiO$_2$ NPs (25 nm) in human embryo kidney (HEK293T) cells. They found that cotreatment with 3.8 µM CdCl$_2$ and 7.5 µg/mL TiO$_2$ NPs exerted additive effects on the cellular oxidative damage by upregulation of heme oxygenase 1 gene expression, catalase activities, and malondialdehyde concentration. A combination of CdCl$_2$ (5.12 µM) and TiO$_2$ NPs (10.05 µg/mL) showed synergetic effects on activities of SOD and ROS concentrations. Zhang et al assessed the bioaccumulation of Cd in carp in the presence of TiO$_2$ NPs (21 nm) and found that the presence of TiO$_2$ NPs and the accumulation of Cd in carp was positively correlated.

Hu et al investigated the combined effects of TiO$_2$ NPs (21 nm) and humic acid (HA) on the bioaccumulation of Cd in zebrafish. They found that the presence of TiO$_2$ NPs at 5–20 mg/L in water containing HA could alter the exposure of Cd and other potential heavy metals to zebrafish. The presence of TiO$_2$ NPs or HA alone with Cd slightly increased the uptake rate constants of Cd in fish. TiO$_2$ NPs have a slightly higher uptake than HA, whereas mixtures of HA and TiO$_2$ NPs with Cd slightly reduced the uptake rate constants. The mechanism underlying these combined effects is unclear.
Yang et al. investigated Cd adsorption on polyacrylate-coated TiO$_2$ NPs, which could decrease the concentration of Cd ion in an aquatic environment and its effect on the bioavailability as well as toxicity of Cd to green algae Chlamydomonas reinhardtii. They found that Cd absorbed quickly on to TiO$_2$ NPs (anatase, 1–10 nm), reaching a steady state within 30 minutes. Interestingly, they found that the presence of TiO$_2$ NPs could alleviate the Cd toxicity to the green algae cells, which might be caused by TiO$_2$ NP adsorption on Cd$^{2+}$, resulting in a decrease of free Cd ion in the medium and, further, its bioaccumulation in the algal cells. In addition, the electrostatic and potentially steric repulsions between TiO$_2$ NPs and algal cells might hinder their direct contact with each other and then prevent the internalization of TiO$_2$ NPs into the cells.

Taken together, toxicities of TiO$_2$ NPs alone have been well documented. However, knowledge of the combined effects of TiO$_2$ NPs with other chemicals is limited. The existing evidence suggests that TiO$_2$ NPs can absorb metal ions, including Pb, As, Cu, and Cd, in the solution. Meanwhile, interaction of TiO$_2$ NPs and metal compounds (see Table 1) may also result in the increased toxicity demonstrated by increased oxidative stress to cells and decreased LC$_{50}$ to aquatic organisms. Therefore, more ecology investigations and biology experiments of their combined toxicity should be carried out.

### Effects of TiO$_2$ NP interaction with organic and inorganic compounds

Bisphenol A (BPA) is an endocrine disruptor that can mimic estrogen and may lead to adverse health effects. Woodruff et al. analyzed data for 163 chemical analytes in 12 chemical classes in subsamples of 268 pregnant women from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey.

### Table 1 Studies in vitro on the interactive effects of TiO$_2$ NPs with chemicals or physical factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Supplier</th>
<th>Characteristics of TiO$_2$ NPs</th>
<th>Dispersion method</th>
<th>Exposure concentration (µg/mL)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Degussa</td>
<td>21, 80% anatase, 20% rutile</td>
<td>10 min ultrasonication and 30 s vortex mixing</td>
<td>0.001, 0.01, 0.1, 1, 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>Degussa</td>
<td>25, 80% anatase, 20% rutile</td>
<td>Suspended fresh immediately before use</td>
<td>0, 0.25, 0.5, 0.75, 1, 1.25 TU (1TU = 10.05 µg/mL)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>Degussa</td>
<td>25–50, 80% anatase, 20% rutile</td>
<td>Vortexed for 2 min, ultrasonicated for 10 min</td>
<td>0, 1, 5, 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>Degussa</td>
<td>25, 80% anatase, 20% rutile</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>0, 0.1, 0.1, 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>Degussa</td>
<td>21, 80% anatase, 20% rutile</td>
<td>Ultrasonicated for 40 min</td>
<td>0, 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65</td>
<td>Degussa</td>
<td>20, 80% anatase, 20% rutile</td>
<td>Ultrasonicated for 15 min</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66</td>
<td>Wanjin Material Corp; Degussa</td>
<td>4, 10, 21, 25, or 60, anatase, rutile; anatase/rutile (3:1)</td>
<td>Freshly prepared and diluted</td>
<td>0, 1, 10, 50, 100, 200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67</td>
<td>Degussa</td>
<td>20, 70%–85% anatase and 30%–15% rutile</td>
<td>Sonicated for 30 min</td>
<td>0, 1, 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68</td>
<td>Sigma Chemicals; Degussa</td>
<td>&lt;25, anatase, rutile; &lt;100; 31, anatase, 14% rutile</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>50, 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71</td>
<td>Degussa</td>
<td>21, 25% rutile and 75% anatase</td>
<td>Sonicated for 10–15 min</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75</td>
<td>Sigma-Aldrich</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Sonicated for 30 min</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>82</td>
<td>Degussa</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>61, 60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Abbreviations: ↑, combined effect showed a significant increase than TiO$_2$ NPs group and other factor group alone; ↓, combined effect showed a significant decrease than TiO$_2$ NPs group and other factor group alone; ↔, combined effect showed no significant difference than TiO$_2$ NPs group and other factor group alone; 8-OHdG, 8-hydroxydeoxyguanosine; GSH, glutathione; hO-1 gene, heme oxygenase 1 gene; MMP, mitochondrial membrane potential; NA, data not available; NPs, nanoparticles; OGG1, 8-oxoguanine-DNA glycosylase homologue 1; ROS, reactive oxygen species; SOD, superoxide dismutase; TiO$_2$, titanium dioxide; UVA, ultraviolet A; DNA, deoxyribonucleic acid; MDA, malondialdehyde; CAT, catalase activities; NO, nitric oxide; PARP, poly (ADP-ribose) polymerase; MTS, 3-(4,5-dimethylthiazol-2-yl)-5-(3-carboxymethoxyphenyl)- 2-(4-sulfophenyl)-2H-tetrazolium; NAC, N-acetyl cysteine; LDH, lactate dehydrogenase; mRNA, messenger ribonucleic acid; BAX, Bcl-2-associated X protein; DMEM, Dulbecco’s Modified Eagle’s Medium; TU, toxic unit; MEM, Minimum Essential Medium; ADP, adenosine diphosphate; min, minutes; PbAC, Plumbi Acetas; BPA, bisphenol A; HBE, human bronchial epithelial cell; NaF, sodium fluoride; h, hours; Hsc70, a cell type belonging to an immortal human keratinocyte line; RPMI, Roswell Park Memorial Institute; BCL2, B-cell lymphoma 2 protein.
2003–04, a nationally representative sample of the US population. They found that BPA was detectable in 96% of pregnant women. Therefore, interactions between TiO₂ NPs and BPA may occur when TiO₂ NPs are used as drug carriers in the human body. Zheng et al.⁵⁹ evaluated the interactive effects of TiO₂ NPs (25–50 nm) with BPA on their physiochemical properties and in vitro toxicity in human embryo hepatocytes (L-02 cells). They found that TiO₂ NPs alone (0 mg/L, 0.1 mg/L, 1 mg/L, and 10 mg/L) or BPA alone (0 μmol/L, 0.1 μmol/L, 1 μmol/L, and 10 μmol/L) did not exert significant DNA and chromosomal damage, whereas the mixture of TiO₂ NPs and BPA induced a significant increase in oxidative stress, DNA double-strand breaks, and micronuclei formation in a weak synergistic manner. An increase in intracellular levels of BPA bound by TiO₂ NPs was hypothesized to be the reason behind the synergistic toxicity. This could have been determined if the investigators in this study used varying concentrations of TiO₂ NPs in the combination.

Dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane (p,p'-DDT) was widely used as an effective insecticide, and had been proven to have genotoxicity, developmental toxicity, and endocrine-disruptive effects in human beings and a wide range of living organisms.⁶⁰-⁶² Therefore, the degradation of DDT had attracted great attention.⁵³,⁵⁴ Recently, TiO₂ NPs have been tested to degrade the p,p'-DDT, which increases the risk of exposure to mixtures of TiO₂ NPs and p,p'-DDT. Shi et al.⁵⁵ examined the interactive toxicities of p,p'-DDT and TiO₂ NPs (25 nm) at low concentrations in L-02 cells. The mixtures induced higher toxicity than TiO₂ NPs or p,p'-DDT alone. Combination of traces of TiO₂ NPs (0 μg/mL, 0.01 μg/mL, 0.1 μg/mL, and 1 μg/mL) and traces of p,p'-DDT (0 μmol/L, 0.001 μmol/L, 0.01 μmol/L, and 0.1 μmol/L) synergistically enhanced genotoxicity, as demonstrated by an increase in

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exposure time</th>
<th>Cell line</th>
<th>Culture medium</th>
<th>Combined factors/exposure condition</th>
<th>Combined effects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24 h</td>
<td>L-02</td>
<td>DMEM</td>
<td>PbAC/1 μg/mL</td>
<td>Cell viability↑, ROS↑, GSH↑, SOD↓, 8-OHdG↑, OGG1 expression↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 h</td>
<td>HEK293T</td>
<td>DMEM</td>
<td>CdCl₂/0.025, 0.5, 0.75, 1, 1.25 TU (1 TU = 5.12 μmol/L)</td>
<td>HO-1 gene express↑, OGG1 expression↑, SOD↓, ROS↑, MDA↔, CAT↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 h</td>
<td>L-02</td>
<td>DMEM</td>
<td>BPA/0.1, 1, 10 μg/mL</td>
<td>Cell viability↔, ROS↑, MDA↑, DNA double strand break↑, chromosomal damage↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12, 24, 36 h</td>
<td>L-02</td>
<td>DMEM</td>
<td>p,p'-DDT/0, 0.001, 0.01, and 0.1 μg/mL</td>
<td>Cell viability↔, apoptosis test↔, ROS↑, MDA↑, 8-OHdG↑, DNA strand break↑, micronucleus frequency↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72 h</td>
<td>16-HBE</td>
<td>RPMI-1640</td>
<td>NaF/0.1, 10, 20, 30 μg/L</td>
<td>Cell viability↔, apoptosis test↑, SOD↑, MDA↑, NO↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 h</td>
<td>HaCaT</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Nitrite, UVA/nitrite: 0, 0.1, 0.5, 1, 2 mM; UVA: 365 nm, 0.6 mW/cm², 1 h</td>
<td>Cell viability↑, apoptosis test↑, protein tyrosine nitration↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 h</td>
<td>HaCaT</td>
<td>MEM</td>
<td>UVA/365 nm, 3.5 mW/cm², 1 h</td>
<td>Cell viability↑, SOD↑, ROS↑, MDA↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0, 24, 48 h</td>
<td>Human peripheral blood lymphocytes</td>
<td>RPMI-1640</td>
<td>UVA/365 nm, 2.0 mW/cm², 0, 24, 48 h</td>
<td>Cell viability↑, sub-G1 phase↑, caspase-9↑, caspase-3↑, and PARP↑, MMP↑, ROS↑DNA damage↑, micronucleus formation↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 h</td>
<td>HaCaT</td>
<td>DMEM</td>
<td>UVA/320–390 nm; 0, 2.5, 5.0, and 10 J/cm²</td>
<td>MTS assay (A325, P25 and A25)↑, ROS↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 h</td>
<td>HaCaT</td>
<td>MEM</td>
<td>NAC, UVA/NAC: 5 mM, 2 h UVA: 365 nm, 3.5 W/cm², 1 h</td>
<td>Cell viability (UVA)↑ (UVA + NAC)↑, LDH (UVA + NAC)↑, apoptosis assay (UVA + NAC)↑, ROS (UVA + NAC)↑, MMP (UVA + NAC)↑, K6 mRNA (UVA + NAC)↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 h</td>
<td>U87-MG</td>
<td>DMEM</td>
<td>UVA/365 nm, 5 J/cm², 20 min Daunorubicin, UVA/daunorubicin: 0.14 mM, 0.2 mM UVA: 100 s</td>
<td>Cell viability↑, BCL2↑, BAX↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 min</td>
<td>Leukemia K562</td>
<td>RPMI-1640</td>
<td>UVA/365 nm, 5 J/cm², 20 min</td>
<td>Drug accumulation↑</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
oxidative stress, oxidative DNA adducts, DNA breaks, and chromosomal damage in L-02 cells. The adsorption of p,p'-DDT by TiO$_2$ NPs was approximately 0.3 mmol/g. Synergistic genotoxicity induced by a combination of traces of p,p'-DDT and TiO$_2$ NPs may be a potential environmental risk factor. Sodium fluoride (NaF) and TiO$_2$ NPs are useful additives in household products such as toothpastes. Xie et al. examined the combined effects of NaF and TiO$_2$ NPs (21 nm) in human bronchial epithelial cells (16-HBE) and found that combined exposure of NaF and TiO$_2$ NPs could enhance the oxidative stress in 16-HBE cells. In another study, Xu et al. investigated the interactions of TiO$_2$ NPs with functional biomolecule lysozymes in culture cells. They found that lysozymes were adsorbed on to the surface of TiO$_2$ NPs (60 nm) via electrostatic attraction and hydrogen bonds. They therefore suggested that TiO$_2$ NPs might have some toxic impacts on biomolecules after interacting with biomolecule lysozymes. In summary, studies on the effects of TiO$_2$ NP interaction with organic or inorganic compounds are limited. The existing evidence indicates that interaction of TiO$_2$ NPs with BPA, p,p'-DDT, or NaF may result in enhancement of oxidative stress and further cytotoxicity.

**Effects of TiO$_2$ NP interaction with the physical factor UVA**

TiO$_2$ NPs possess excellent optical and electrical properties. Due to photocatalysis, TiO$_2$ NPs are used to degrade formaldehyde and thus improve air quality in the indoor environment. However, some studies suggest that TiO$_2$ NPs might be toxic under ultraviolet A (UVA), an electromagnetic radiation with wavelength range from 315 nm to 400 nm, ISO-21348. Lu et al. found that TiO$_2$ NPs (20 nm) could induce photocatalytic nitration of the protein tyrosine, which could lead to prevalent post-translational modification by TiO$_2$ NPs as a result of oxidative and nitrosative stress. In another study, Tu et al. found that nitrosative stress induced by TiO$_2$ NPs (20 nm) under UVA radiation triggered apoptotic cell death in human keratinocytes. This result suggests that skincare products with TiO$_2$ NP components may cause damage to human keratinocyte cells under UVA radiation. Xue et al. investigated the oxidative stress and cytotoxicity induced by different crystalline forms (anatase, rutile, and anatase/rutile) and sizes (4 nm, 10 nm, 21 nm, 25 nm, or 60 nm) of TiO$_2$ NPs in HaCaT cells under UVA irradiation. They found that TiO$_2$ NPs could induce ROS generation and toxicity in cells under UVA irradiation. Kang et al. also showed that TiO$_2$ NPs (20 nm) and UVA (0.6 mW/cm$^2$ for 1 hour) synergistically promoted ROS generation and triggered cell apoptosis. Yin et al. examined the phototoxicity of TiO$_2$ NPs with different sizes and crystal forms (anatase and rutile) in human skin keratinocytes under UVA irradiation. They found that TiO$_2$ NPs are phototoxic to human skin keratinocytes, and that the phototoxicity is mediated by ROS generated during UVA radiation. Moreover, the phototoxicity of TiO$_2$ NPs was less with larger particle size and surface areas. Zhang et al. investigated the combined effects of TiO$_2$ NPs and UVA exposure on African clawed frogs (Xenopus laevis). They found that, regardless of UVA exposure, the rate of X. laevis survival decreased with increased concentrations of TiO$_2$ NPs. Exposure to 10 nm TiO$_2$ NPs and UVA significantly decreased the rate of X. laevis survival. However, exposure to 32 nm TiO$_2$ NPs and UVA had no statistical effect on the rate of X. laevis survival. This experiment suggests that toxicity is related to the size of TiO$_2$ NPs to some extent. Bar-Ilan et al. also found that TiO$_2$ NPs under UV produced ROS as the major phototoxic agent to the development of zebrafish. Xue et al. examined the chemoprotective effects of N-acetylcysteine (NAC) (5 mM pretreated for 2 hours) on TiO$_2$ NP-induced (21 nm, 200 µg/mL for 24 hours) oxidative stress and apoptosis in human keratinocytes under UVA (3.5 mW/cm$^2$ for 1 hour). NAC, a nutritional supplement for cysteine donating, is widely used as an antioxidant. They found that NAC could prevent TiO$_2$ NP-induced oxidative stress and apoptosis in cells. The protective effects of NAC on TiO$_2$ NP-induced apoptosis were related to modulation of ROS and intracellular nitric oxide levels. It is worth noting that the combined effect of TiO$_2$ NPs and UVA may be a double-edged sword. Wang et al. investigated the antitumor effects of TiO$_2$ NPs under UV produced ROS excited with UVA irradiation both in vitro and in vivo. Their results revealed that TiO$_2$ NPs alone had no effect on glioma cell proliferation. However, when TiO$_2$ NPs were combined with UVA irradiation, the proliferation rate of cells was decreased significantly compared with controls (TiO$_2$ NPs alone or UVA alone). They further investigated the in vivo antitumor effects of combined TiO$_2$ NPs plus UVA on established glioma tumors. TiO$_2$ NPs plus UVA led to pronounced areas of necrosis, elevated indices of apoptosis, delayed tumor growth, and increased survival compared with the TiO$_2$ NPs alone or UVA alone. Moreover, the log-rank test for trend in survival analysis of tumors implanted in animals showed that the average survival duration was prolonged. Additionally, degradation, detoxification, and/or bactericidal effects of TiO$_2$ NPs under UVA to some pesticides or drugs in the ecosystem have been widely investigated.
(λ > 350 nm), a TiO₂ electron excites an electron from the valance band to the conduction band and electron hole pairs are generated in the surface of TiO₂, which consists of the positive hole (h⁺) and electron (e⁻). The hole in the valence band has a positive redox potential and is capable of oxidizing organics, H₂O, and hydroxide ions on the surface of TiO₂ NPs, and eventually to generate hydroxyl radicals (OH). At the same time, the electron promoted from the valence band to the conduction band reduces oxygen into a superoxide radical (O₂⁻). OH, O₂⁻, and other perhydroxyl radicals have a strong oxidability to degrade pesticides, drugs, and organic substances (Figure 2). The photocatalytic effects of TiO₂ NPs have been indicated to degrade pesticides such as endosulfan and organochlorine. Seitz et al found that TiO₂ NPs (~100 nm; 0.2 mg/L) could reduce nearly 30% of the pirimicarb concentration under UV irradiation (40 W/m² for 15 minutes), which resulted in an almost complete removal of pirimicarb toxicity to D. magna. Zhao et al indicated that TiO₂ NPs under UV irradiation could degrade oxytetracycline, which is widely used in both human and veterinary medicine. Higher degraded toxic byproducts were detected by a standardized bioluminescence assay of inhibition rate on Vibrio harveyi sp. –Q67 (Q67), which indicates that a possible enhancement in ecological toxicity may occur after combination of TiO₂ NPs with oxytetracycline under UVA irradiation. These results indicate that the photocatalytic effect of TiO₂ NPs on pesticides and drugs under UVA irradiation may result in either increased or decreased toxicity, depending on the characteristics of the byproducts.

Li et al demonstrated that Ag–TiO₂ NPs showed a greater synergistic bactericidal activity under UV than TiO₂ (inert) or pure Ag NPs alone to Gram-positive bacteria Bacillus subtilis and Gram-negative bacteria Pseudomonas putida at 25°C. Additionally, Song et al found that the synergistic effect of TiO₂ NPs under UV irradiation could enhance the drug accumulation dose in targeted leukemia K562 cells and inhibit multidrug resistance. Their findings suggest that combined effects of TiO₂ NPs and UVA irradiation may be beneficial for tumor treatment. TiO₂ NPs have been well investigated in recent years for enhancing the photocatalytic activity, coating, and doping of zinc oxide (ZnO) on to its surface. Liao et al found that TiO₂/ZnO composite NPs had a higher photocatalytic activity in the degradation of methyl orange than both TiO₂ and shape-controlled NPs alone. Additionally, Jiang et al demonstrated that a combination of the nanosized TiO₂ and ZnO powders displayed high photocatalytic activity toward the decolorization of C.I. Basic Blue 41 in water under solar radiation, and a Ti/Zn molar ratio of 1:1 showed highest photocatalytic activity.

In conclusion, TiO₂ NPs excited with UVA irradiation could induce ROS generation and thus trigger photocatalytic nitration of the protein tyrosine, oxidative stress, and eventually cell apoptosis. Increased oxidative stress damage may be the principal toxic mechanism. Combined toxicity of TiO₂ NPs under UVA may be through ROS-mediated upregulation

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**Figure 2** Interactive effects (degradation and absorption) of titanium dioxide (TiO₂) nanoparticles (NPs) with chemicals under ultraviolet A (UVA) radiation.

**Abbreviations:** OH, hydroxyl radicals; O₂⁻, oxygen; O₂⁻, superoxide radical; H₂O, water; e⁻, electron; h⁺, the positive hole.

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of the death receptor Fas, and activation of the preapoptotic protein Bad.46 Meanwhile, ROS-induced p53-mediated DNA damage can lead to G1/M cell-cycle arrest or delay and mitochondrial DNA damage.67,69,88 These procedures can ultimately lead to cell apoptosis. This combined toxicity could be alleviated by antioxidant NAC. The combined effects of TiO2 NPs and UVA are a double-edged sword. Synergistic effects in ROS generation and cytotoxicity after a combination of TiO2 NPs and UVA irradiation may be beneficial in the treatment of tumors. A combination of TiO2 NPs and UVA irradiation may also be helpful in degradation of pesticide or drug content in the environment. The beneficial effects also include enhancement in bactericidal activity. However, degradation may also be a possible contributor. An enhancement in toxicity in the ecosystem occurs when higher toxics are degraded and byproducts are generated. Therefore, more studies are necessary to elucidate the effects of the interaction of TiO2 NPs with different drugs or pesticides in ecosystems under UV radiation.

**Summary**

Research data on the effects of the interaction of TiO2 NPs with chemicals or physical factors are emerging slowly. Experimental factors such as agglomeration/aggregation of NPs, cell type, dispersion method, or culture medium may all affect the experiment results,15,88,90 which may inevitably cause difficulties in interpreting these results. To give the whole picture of the experiments, we summarize in detail the combined toxicities of TiO2 and chemicals or physical factors for all available studies in Tables 1 and 2.

The existing evidence suggests that TiO2 NPs can absorb metals, including Pb, As, Cu, and Cd, or their ions in solution. A combination of TiO2 NPs with metals, organic or inorganic compounds such as BPA, p,p-DDT, or NaF, and physical factors such as UVA light can result in an increase in oxidative stress and toxicity in culture cells or in aquatic animals. Oxidative stress may further induce tumor gene expression or lead to nuclear and mitochondrial DNA damage in mammalian cells. Further well-designed studies are necessary to
elucidate possible mechanisms of these combined effects. In addition, combined toxicity of TiO$_2$ NPs with ZnO/Fe$_2$O$_3$ is yet to be investigated by molecular biological and toxicological experiments. Meanwhile, studies on the combined toxicity of TiO$_2$ NPs with other nanosized particles in toxicology and nanomedicine are also urgently needed. Human epidemiological investigation on the combination of TiO$_2$ NPs with other chemicals is urgently encouraged because TiO$_2$ NPs are increasingly being used as drug carriers in nanomedicine. Studies on the combined effects of TiO$_2$ NPs with chemicals or physical factors on aquatic animals are also urgently needed. In addition, the combined effects of TiO$_2$ NPs with chemicals or physical factors may serve as a double-edged sword. Therefore, studies are also encouraged for TiO$_2$ NP application in heavy metal pollution prevention and tumor treatment.

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**Disclosure**

The authors report no conflicts of interest in this work.

**References**


