

- Describe how hydrophilic and hydrophobic colloids are stabilised in water.

They can be stabilised via electrostatic and steric stabilisation.

Hydrophilic colloids may have a charge on their surface that attracts oppositely charged ions (H^+ or OH^- present in water) to form a tightly bound layer known as the Stern Layer. The Stern layer is surrounded by a diffuse layer which contains an excess of counter-ions (opposite in charge to the Stern layer) and a deficit of co-ions. The Stern layer and diffuse layer are collectively known as a double layer. Coagulation of a hydrophilic colloid is prevented by mutual repulsion of the double layers.

Hydrophobic colloids may be stabilised by the use of a surfactant, e.g. a long chain fatty acid with a polar head and a non-polar tail. When dispersed in water these molecules arrange themselves spherically so that the polar (hydrophilic) heads are interacting with the polar water molecules and the non-polar (hydrophobic) tails are interacting with each other. This arrangement is called a micelle. The hydrophobic colloid can be stabilized by dissolving in the non-polar interior of the micelle.

