Acta Crystallographica Section F
Structural Biology and Crystallization Communications
ISSN 1744-3091

Structure of an *Escherichia coli* *N*-acetyl-D-neuraminic acid lyase mutant, E192N, in complex with pyruvate at 1.45 Å resolution

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Received 6 July 2009
Accepted 15 September 2009

PDB Reference: *N*-acetyl-D-neuraminic acid lyase, 2wkj, r2wkjsf.

The structure of a mutant variant of *Escherichia coli* *N*-acetyl-D-neuraminic acid lyase (NAL), E192N, in complex with pyruvate has been determined in a new crystal form. It crystallized in space group $P2_12_12_1$, with unit-cell parameters $a = 78.3$, $b = 108.5$, $c = 148.3$ Å. Pyruvate has been trapped in the active site as a Schiff base with the catalytic lysine (Lys165) without the need for reduction. Unlike the previously published crystallization conditions for the wild-type enzyme, in which a mother-liquor-derived sulfate ion is strongly bound in the catalytic pocket, the low-salt conditions described here will facilitate the determination of further *E. coli* NAL structures in complex with other active-site ligands.

1. Introduction

N-Acetyl-D-neuraminic acid lyase (NAL; EC 4.1.3.3) catalyses the reversible aldol condensation of pyruvate and *N*-acetyl-D-mannosamine to yield *N*-acetyl-D-neuraminic acid (Brunetti *et al.*, 1962; Schauer *et al.*, 1999). NAL belongs to the aldolase family, which can be subdivided into two classes on the basis of the reaction mechanism. In class I aldolases, including NAL, the reaction proceeds through the formation of a Schiff base between a protein lysine residue and the substrate pyruvate, whereas in class II aldolases the intermediates are stabilized by a metal cofactor (*e.g.* Zn^{+}) (Plater *et al.*, 1999). Many structures of class I aldolases have been reported and all share the same TIM-barrel fold (Izard *et al.*, 1994; Wymer *et al.*, 2001; Theodossis *et al.*, 2004; Pauluhn *et al.*, 2008). The structure of NAL from *Escherichia coli* has previously been determined in space group $P3_221$ crystallized from a solution containing saturated ammonium sulfate (Izard *et al.*, 1994). The presence of a sulfate ion strongly bound in the catalytic pocket of this structure has been considered to be the likely cause of the failure of substrate-soaking experiments. Crystals of a mutant *E. coli* NAL from low-salt conditions have been reported in complex with the inhibitor β-hydroxypyruvate (Joerger *et al.*, 2003), but no substrate-complex structures are available. In contrast, NAL from *Haemophilus influenzae* crystallizes readily under low-salt conditions and several complexes with inhibitors or substrate analogues have been reported (Barbosa *et al.*, 2000), although the pyruvate Schiff-base complex could only be trapped after reduction by sodium borohydride (Izard *et al.*, 1994).

A range of analogues of *N*-acetyl-D-neuraminic acid are well established drugs for the treatment of influenza, targeting the sialidase (von Itzstein, 2007). Some potent inhibitors of influenza A sialidase have been discovered in which the glycerol side chain of *N*-acetyl-D-neuraminic acid has been replaced by a dialkylaminocarbonyl substituent (Smith *et al.*, 1998; Taylor *et al.*, 1998). Unfortunately, these modified ligands may not readily be prepared using wild-type *E. coli* NAL as the catalyst and require complex chemical synthesis. The enzyme has therefore been subjected to directed evolution (Williams *et al.*, 2005) in order to broaden its substrate specificity. This programme resulted in the discovery of the mutant variant E192N, which has a sixfold higher specificity (k_{cat}/K_m) for dipropylaminocarbonyl-substituted derivatives than wild-type NAL

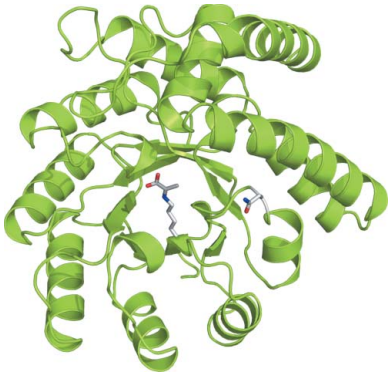

Table 1
Data-collection and refinement statistics.

Values in parentheses are for the outermost shell of the resolution range.

Data collection	
Space group	$P2_12_12_1$
Unit-cell parameters (Å)	a = 78.3, b = 108.5, c = 148.3
Resolution (Å)	63.41–1.45 (1.53–1.45)
R_{merge}†	0.077 (0.375)
$R_{p.i.m.}$‡	0.036 (0.172)
$\langle I\rangle/\mathrm{sd}\langle I\rangle$	11.6 (3.4)
Completeness (%)	96.2 (89.5)
Redundancy	5.1 (4.9)
Refinement	
No. of reflections	1095072 (138933)
No. of unique reflections	213226 (28642)
R_{work}§	0.167 (0.280)
R_{free}	0.189 (0.290)
No. of atoms	10677
Protein	9336
Ligands	34
Water	1307
Average B factors (Å^2)	
Protein	14.4
Covalently bound pyruvate	10.8
Noncovalently bound pyruvate	28.7
PEG 400	50.0
Waters	16.5
R.m.s. deviations¶	
Bond lengths (Å)	0.012
Bond angles (°)	1.346
Ramachandran statistics†† (%)	
Most favoured	100
Outliers	0
PDB code	2wkj

† $R_{merge} = \sum_{hkl}\sum_i |I_i(hkl) - \langle I(hkl)\rangle|/\sum_{hkl}\sum_i I_i(hkl)$. ‡ $R_{p.i.m.} = \sum_{hkl}[1/(N-1)]^{1/2} \times \sum_i |I_i(hkl) - \langle I(hkl)\rangle|/\sum_{hkl}\sum_i I_i(hkl)$. § The crystallographic R factor was calculated as $\sum_{hkl}\big||F_{obs}| - |F_{calc}|\big|/\sum_{hkl}|F_{obs}|$, with 5% of reflections set aside randomly for calculation of R_{free}. ¶ Based on the ideal geometry values of Engh & Huber (1991). †† Ramachandran analysis using the program *MolProbity* (Davis *et al.*, 2007).

has for its natural substrate sialic acid (Williams *et al.*, 2005). We are pursuing X-ray structures of complexes of this NAL variant with substrates and inhibitors in order to identify the structural basis of the improved specificity. Here, we report a new crystal form of *E. coli* NAL obtained under low-salt conditions, which will allow us to carry out substrate-soaking experiments. We present the high-resolution structure (1.45 Å) of the variant E192N–pyruvate complex obtained by cocrystallization with pyruvate without the need for trapping by sodium borohydride reduction.

2. Experimental

The *E. coli* NAL variant E192N was isolated and purified as previously described (Williams *et al.*, 2005). The protein was concentrated to 10 mg ml^{-1} and incubated for 1 h at 310 K with 100 m*M* sodium pyruvate before setting up crystallization trials.

Initial sitting-drop trials were performed by screening different commercial conditions from Hampton Research (Index, SaltRx, Crystal Screen and MembFac) and Emerald BioSystems (Wizard I and II) using an Oryx 6 robot (Douglas Instruments). The best crystals grew from 100 m*M* Tris–HCl pH 8.2, 200 m*M* ammonium acetate, 18% PEG 3350. Plate-shaped crystals appeared after 10 d at 277 K. Data were collected to a resolution of 1.45 Å from a single crystal at 100 K at the Diamond Synchrotron Light Source (station I04), were indexed using *MOSFLM* (Leslie, 2006) and were scaled and merged using *SCALA* (Evans, 2006) (Table 1). 5% of the reflections were excluded from the refinement and constituted the R_{free} set. The structure was solved by molecular replacement using *Phaser* (McCoy, 2007) with the structure of the *E. coli* NAL wild-type protein as the search model (PDB code 1nal). Refinement was carried out with *REFMAC* (Murshudov *et al.*, 1997). Stereochemical restraints for the ligand pyruvate bound to Lys165 were obtained from *PRODRG* (http://davapc1.bioch.dundee.ac.uk/prodrg/index.html), while TLS refinement was applied following determination of TLS

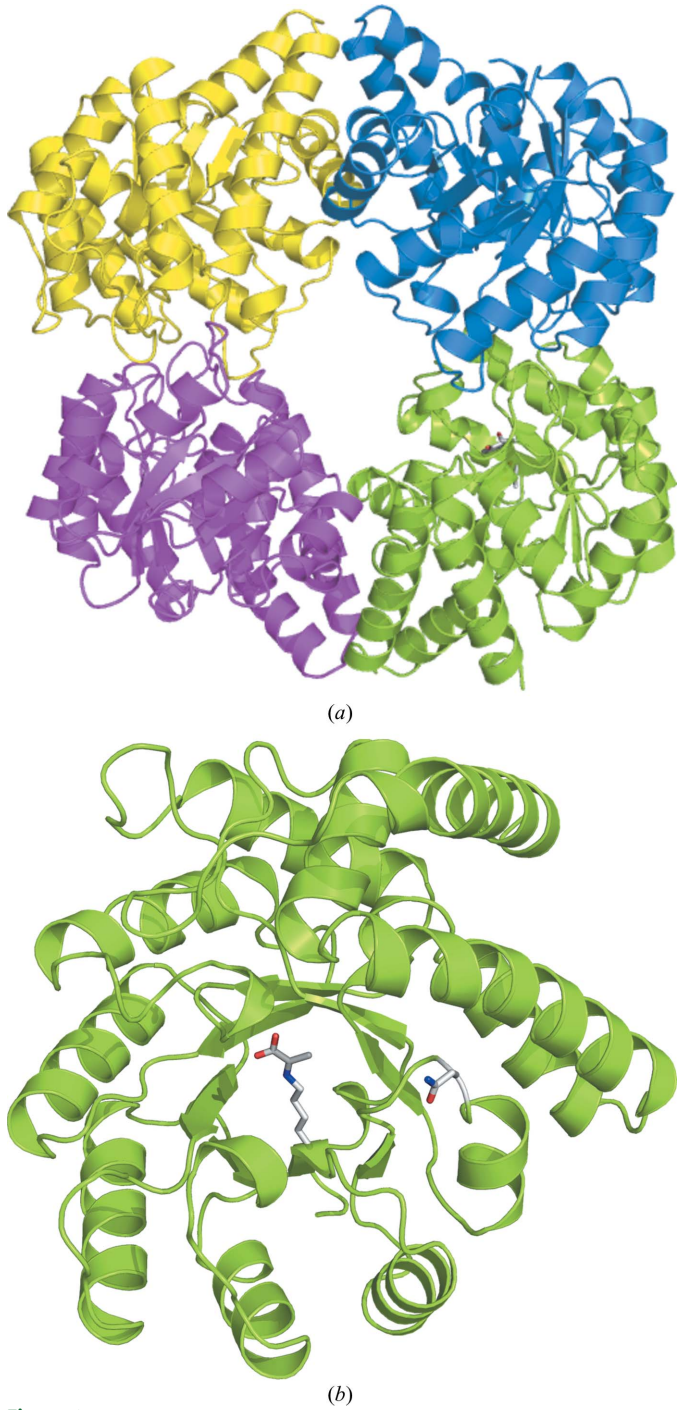

Figure 1
(*a*) Overall structure of the NAL variant E192N homotetramer showing each chain of the NAL variant E192N as a coloured ribbon. In the green-coloured monomer both the Schiff-base complex between Lys165 and pyruvate and the mutated residue E192N are shown as sticks coloured by atom type. (*b*) View of a single NAL monomer, showing the location of the lysine–pyruvate Schiff base and the E192N mutation within the α/β barrel. This figure was generated using *PyMOL* v.0.99 (DeLano, 2002).

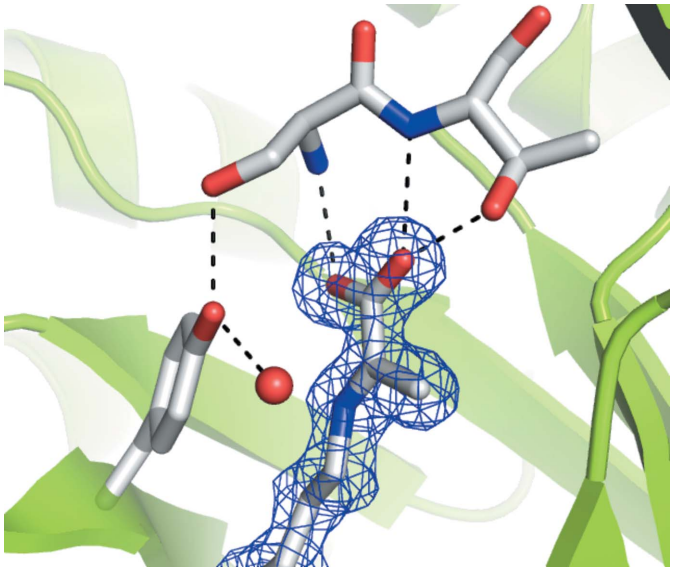

Figure 2
Electron density for the Schiff base between Lys165 and pyruvate. The planarity of the $2F_o - F_c$ map (contoured at 1.0 r.m.s.) is consistent with the formation of a Schiff base between Lys165 and pyruvate. The hydrogen-bond network between pyruvate and Thr48 and Ser47 and between Tyr137, Ser47 and a water is well conserved in all members of the NAL family.

domains using the *TLSMD* server (http://skuld.bmsc.washington.edu/~tlsmd/). Superposition of structures and calculation of their r.m.s. deviation were performed with *LSQKAB* (Collaborative Computational Project, Number 4, 1994). Water molecules were added in *Coot* (Emsley & Cowtan, 2004) for peaks over 3.0σ in the $F_o - F_c$ map and structure validation was carried out with *MolProbity* (Davis *et al.*, 2007).

3. Results and discussion

E192N NAL in space group $P2_12_12_1$ has one noncrystallographic tetramer per asymmetric unit, with a very similar structure to that of the wild-type enzyme (PDB code 1nal) determined in space group $P3_221$ (Fig. 1). The r.m.s.d. between these structures is only 0.5 Å for all atoms, despite the difference in space group and crystallization conditions. The structure is also very similar to that of the L142R β-hydroxypyruvate inhibitor-complex structure (PDB code 1hl2; 0.8 Å r.m.s.d. for all atoms; Joerger *et al.*, 2003), which was determined under different low-salt conditions in space group $P2_1$ (100 m*M* sodium acetate pH 4.6 and 8% PEG 4000). For the first time for *E. coli* NAL we were able to trap the Schiff-base complex between pyruvate and Lys165 without the need for reduction with sodium borohydride. Schiff-base formation is confirmed by the planarity of the electron-density map for the conjugated pyruvate (Fig. 2). The hydrogen-bond network between pyruvate and Ser47 and Thr48, and between Tyr137 and Ser47 and a water (here water 48) is well conserved in all the NAL family members (Fig. 2). One additional noncovalently bound pyruvate molecule is present in the catalytic pocket of subunits *C* and *D*, probably owing to the high concentration of sodium pyruvate in the crystallization buffer. One molecule of cryoprotecting agent PEG 400 is also present in both chain *A* and chain *C*, lying on the twofold axis. We have also been able to obtain diffracting crystals of wild-type *E. coli* NAL under the same conditions (data not shown). These new low-salt crystallization conditions for *E. coli* NAL are particularly exciting as they will allow ligand- and inhibitor-soaking studies that were not possible under the previously published high-salt crystallization conditions. These will enable us to probe the origin of the broadened substrate specificity of the E192N variant.

IC is supported by a Wellcome Trust PhD Studentship. ARP is supported by a RCUK Fellowship. This work was supported by the BBSRC (BB/E000622/1). We thank the MX beamline staff at Diamond Light Source for assistance with data collection.

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