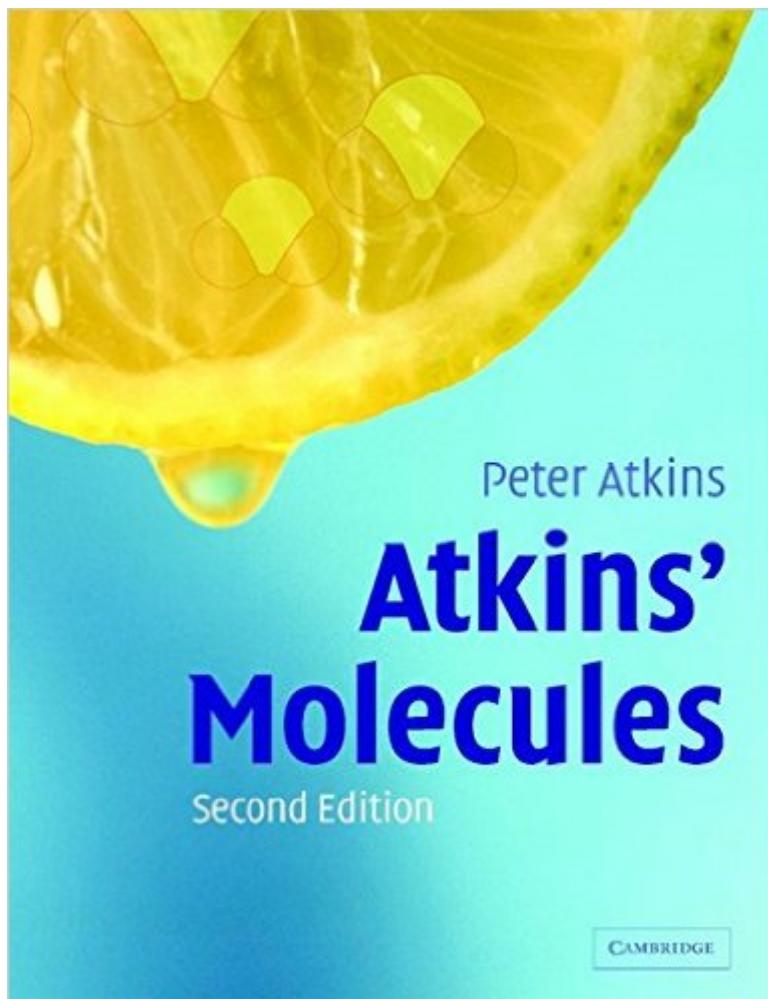


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# Atkins' Molecules



## Synopsis

In this new edition of the book that was called "the most beautiful chemistry book ever written," Peter Atkins reveals the molecules responsible for the experiences of our everyday life in fabrics, drugs, plastics, explosives, detergents, fragrances, tastes, and sex. Atkins gives a non-technical account of a range of aspects of the world around us, revealing unexpected connections and insight into how it can be understood in terms of the atoms and molecules from which it is built. This new edition has dozens of new molecules, new graphic presentations, and a more accessible account of the molecules themselves. Peter Atkins is SmithKline Beecham Fellow and Tutor in Physical Chemistry at Oxford University. Atkins' research includes the fields of theoretical chemistry, particularly magnetic resonance and the electromagnetic properties of molecules. He spends virtually all his time writing books, which range from bestselling college textbooks to books on science for general audiences, including *Galileo's Finger* (Oxford, 2003); *The Periodic Kingdom* (Basic Books, 1997); *The Second Law* (W.H. Freeman, 1995); and *Atoms, Electrons, and Change* (W.H. Freeman, 1991). Previous Edition Paperback (W.H. Freeman, 1995) 0-7167-2928-8

## Book Information

Paperback: 244 pages

Publisher: Cambridge University Press; 2 edition (October 6, 2003)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0521535360

ISBN-13: 978-0521535366

Product Dimensions: 7.4 x 0.5 x 9.7 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 starsÂ  See all reviewsÂ  (6 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #422,538 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #41 inÂ  Books > Science & Math > Physics > Nuclear Physics > Atomic & Nuclear Physics #283 inÂ  Books > Science & Math > Chemistry > Physical & Theoretical #383 inÂ  Books > Science & Math > Chemistry > Organic

## Customer Reviews

This is a popular book on organic chemistry, a celebrated one at that, this being the second edition, substantially revised. The first was published in 1987. It is one of those almost legendary books of the publishing history, a technical book on a highly technical subject that somehow managed to reach something close to a large readership. Ironically, the reason is not so much in the drawings of the molecules, but in the text. Peter Atkins covers a wide range of interesting molecules and shows

how they are related, and he makes their properties semi-accessible to the general reader. I say, "semi" because, frankly for this chemistry-challenged person, seeing two-dimensional shapes of the molecules helps me to understand them only slightly. I suspect for those more conversant with chemistry, the drawings (new for this edition) will be valuable. To me, the mystery of why a certain shape and elemental composition should result in a nutritious substance whereas something else with only the slightest change should be poisonous is not dispelled. He begins with "Simple substances," oxygen molecules, nitrogen, our air and its pollutants. He ends with the very complex DNA and RNA. Along the way he enlightens us about so many of the chemicals and foods and consumer products we use in our daily lives from soaps and gasoline to fats and oils, to painkillers and street drugs. His style is very readable and he has the welcome knack of being informative about interesting things. Here are some examples: Baking power releases carbon dioxide to leaven baked goods in two separate bursts. "The first burst occurs at room temperature as a result of the action of the moistened tartaric acid... The second...

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