

Vocabulary



monomer a small molecule that joins other small molecules to make a polymer

Proteins are made up of small molecules called amino acids. Amino acids are the monomers that make up proteins. Sometimes you can tell the name of the monomer from the name of the polymer formed. For example, *polyethylene* (used in plastic bags and plastic wrap) is a polymer formed from ethylene monomers.

polymer a large molecule made from chemical reactions between many small molecules

Poly means "many." When many monomers react with each other, they form a polymer. A polymer can contain just a few monomer units, or it can contain tens of thousands of them. Carbohydrates such as cellulose and starch are polymers of certain sugars, which are monomers.