

GRAPHENE: THE CARBON-BASED 'WONDER MATERIAL'

Since its discovery in 2003, graphene has been a hot topic in chemistry and materials science research. It's been linked with water purification, electronics, and biomedical applications. However, how close are we really to using graphene in our day-to-day lives? This graphic looks at its properties, uses, and future.

WHAT IS GRAPHENE?



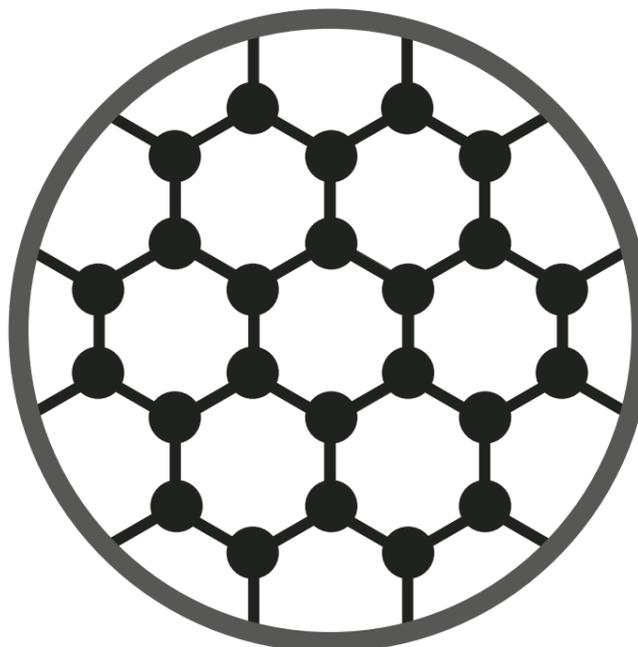
SINGLE LAYER OF CARBON ATOMS

HONEYCOMB-LIKE STRUCTURE

GRAPHITE IS LAYERS OF GRAPHENE

ISOLATED IN 2003 IN MANCHESTER

Graphene is a single layer of graphite, the carbon-based material found in pencil leads. Graphite has been known for centuries, but graphene was only isolated in 2003, by shearing layers off of graphite using sellotape. It's a single atom-thick layer of carbon atoms, that are arranged in a flat, hexagonal lattice structure.



POTENTIAL USES OF GRAPHENE



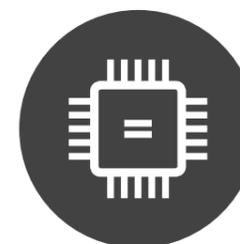
TOUCH SCREENS IN DEVICES

Graphene's transparency and conductivity means that it can be used in displays and touchscreens. However, currently these are more expensive to produce than the currently used material, indium tin oxide.



WATER FILTRATION SYSTEMS

Graphene allows water to pass through it, but not other liquids and gases, so it can be used in water purification. Researchers are working on a device that could be capable of filtering salt from sea water.



IN ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Graphene has been touted as silicon's successor, and has been used to make very fast transistors. However, its conductivity cannot be 'switched off' as silicon's can. Other 2D materials seem more promising.



MEDICAL SENSORS & DRUG DELIVERY

Several biomedical applications are being explored for graphene, including drug delivery, cancer therapy, and its use as a sensor. However, its toxicity profile must be investigated before any clinical uses.



ENERGY STORAGE & COMPOSITES

Graphene-based energy storage devices are possible. It can also substitute for graphite in normal batteries, improving efficiency. Additionally, it can be added to materials to make them stronger and more lightweight.

THE PROPERTIES OF GRAPHENE



HIGH ELECTRICAL CONDUCTIVITY



200X STRONGER THAN STEEL



THIN AND LIGHTWEIGHT



HIGH THERMAL CONDUCTIVITY



VERY HIGH TRANSPARENCY

Graphene's 'wonder material' reputation stems from its superlative properties. It is a million times thinner than a piece of paper, yet stronger than diamond, and 200 times stronger than steel, due to the strong carbon-carbon bonds. It's also a flexible material, and conducts heat and electricity better than copper. Being only one atom thick, almost 98% of visible light passes through graphene, making it transparent.

