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Azo-pyrene-based fluorescent sensor of reductive cleavage of isomeric azo functional group

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In this study we investigated the reductive azo cleavage of an azo compound presenting a pyrene fluorophore (Azo-py). Because of dramatic changes in its fluorescence, Azo-py could be used as a monitoring system for the reductive azo cleavage. Electron transfer from the pyrene unit to the azo moiety induced fluorescence quenching; this quenched fluorescence was recovered after the reductive azo cleavage. IR and NMR spectroscopy were used to study the various structural states. The rate of reductive cleavage of the azo compound, determined through fluorescence monitoring, depended on its structural state: the cleavage of *trans*-Azo-py was much faster than that of the *cis*-Azo-py. Furthermore, the Azo-py fluorophore was highly sensitive to the presence of zinc, but not other metal compounds, and the pH.

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