

Accepted Manuscript

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PII: S0014-3057(17)32077-3

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eurpolymj.2018.01.002>

Reference: EPJ 8235

To appear in: *European Polymer Journal*

Received Date: 20 November 2017

Revised Date: 28 December 2017

Accepted Date: 5 January 2018

Please cite this article as: Hussain, I., Mir Sayed, S., Liu, S., Yao, F., Oderinde, O., Fu, G., Hydroxyethyl Cellulose-Based Self-Healing Hydrogels with Enhanced Mechanical Properties *via* Metal-Ligand Bond Interactions, *European Polymer Journal* (2018), doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eurpolymj.2018.01.002>

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Hydroxyethyl Cellulose-Based Self-Healing Hydrogels with Enhanced Mechanical Properties *via* Metal-Ligand Bond Interactions

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1. We present the synthesis of hydroxyethyl cellulose based hydrogel with enhanced self-healing and mechanical properties.
2. The engineered hydrogel shows high tensile strength (1.35 MPa), extensive fracture strain (1660%), high toughness (8.8 MJm⁻³) and a compression stress of 28 MPa.
3. The designed hydrogel also exhibits outstanding self-healing efficiency (87%) without any external intervention at room temperature.

Abstract

Self-healing hydrogels with robust mechanical properties is the primary objective of hydrogel materials. In this work, we report the synthesis of iron (III) containing hydroxyethyl cellulose based hydrogel (**HEC/PAA-Fe³⁺**) through dynamic metal-ligand (M-L) interactions with enhanced self-healing and mechanical properties. The decoration of ferric ions (Fe³⁺) in a physically cross-linked polymer network (HEC/PAA) introduces dynamic energy dissipative

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