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Survey of ortho-$H_2D^+$ ($1_{1,0}-1_{1,1}$) in dense cloud cores

P. Caselli$^{1,2}$, C. Vastel$^{3,4}$, C. Ceccarelli$^5$, F. F. S. van der Tak$^6$, A. Crapsi$^8$, and A. Bacmann$^{5,9}$

$^1$ School of Physics and Astronomy, University of Leeds, Leeds LS2 9JT, UK
e-mail: p.caselli@leeds.ac.uk
$^2$ INAF – Osservatorio Astrofisico di Arcetri, Largo E. Fermi 5, 50125 Firenze, Italy
$^3$ Université de Toulouse, UPS, CESR, 9 avenue du colonel Roche, BP 44346, 31028 Toulouse Cedex 04, France
$^4$ CNRS, UMR 5187, 31028 Toulouse, France
$^5$ Laboratoire d’Astrophysique, Observatoire de Grenoble, BP 53, 38041 Grenoble Cedex 9, France
$^6$ Max-Planck-Institut für Radioastronomie, Auf dem Hügel 69, 53121 Bonn, Germany
$^7$ National Institute for Space Research (SRON), Postbus 800, 9700 AV Groningen, The Netherlands
$^8$ Leiden Observatory, PO Box 9513, 2300 RA Leiden, The Netherlands
$^9$ Université Bordeaux 1, CNRS, OASU, UMR 5804, 33270 Floirac, France

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ABSTRACT

Aims. We present a survey of the ortho-$H_2D^+$ ($1_{1,0}-1_{1,1}$) line toward a sample of 10 starless cores and 6 protostellar cores, carried out at the Caltech Submillimeter Observatory. The high diagnostic power of this line is revealed for the study of the chemistry, and the evolutionary and dynamical status of low-mass dense cores.

Methods. The derived ortho-$H_2D^+$ column densities ($N$(ortho-$H_2D^+$)) are compared with predictions from simple chemical models of centrally concentrated cloud cores.

Results. The line is detected in 7 starless cores and in 4 protostellar cores. $N$(ortho-$H_2D^+$) ranges between 2 and $4\times10^{12}$ cm$^{-2}$ in starless cores and between 2 and $9\times10^{12}$ cm$^{-2}$ in protostellar cores. The brightest lines are detected toward the densest and most centrally concentrated starless cores, where the CO depletion factor and the deuterium fractionation are also largest. The large scatter observed in plots of $N$(ortho-$H_2D^+$) vs. the observed deuterium fractionation and vs. the CO depletion factor is likely to be due to variations in the ortho-to-para (o/p) ratio of $H_2D^+$ from $>0.5$ for $T_{kin}<10$ K gas in pre-stellar cores to $<0.03$ (consistent with $T_{kin}\approx 15$ K for protostellar cores). The two Ophiuchus cores in our sample also require a relatively low o/p ratio ($\approx 0.3$). Other parameters, including the cosmic-ray ionization rate, the CO depletion factor (or, more in general, the depletion factor of neutral species), the volume density, the fraction of dust grains and PAHs also largely affect the ortho-$H_2D^+$ abundance. In particular, gas temperatures above 15 K, low CO depletion factors and large abundance of negatively charged small dust grains or PAHs drastically reduce the deuterium fractionations to values inconsistent with those observed toward pre-stellar and protostellar cores. The most deuterated and $H_2D^+$-rich objects (L 429, L 1544, L 694-2 and L 183) are reproduced by chemical models of centrally concentrated (central densities $\approx 10^6$ cm$^{-3}$) cores with chemical ages between 10$^3$ and 10$^6$ yr. Upper limits of the para-$H_2O^+$(1$_{1,0}$-2$_{2,1}$) and para-$D_2H^+$(1$_{1,0}$-1$_{1,1}$) lines are also given. The upper limit to the para-$H_2O^+$ fractional abundance is $\approx 10^{-4}$ and we find an upper limit to the para-$D_2H^+$/ortho-$H_2D^+$ column density ratio equal to 1, consistent with chemical model predictions of high density (2 x $10^6$ cm$^{-3}$) and low temperature ($T_{kin}<10$ K) clouds.

Conclusions. Our results point out the need for better determinations of temperature and density profiles in dense cores as well as for observations of para-$H_2D^+$.

Key words. astrochemistry – stars: formation – ISM: clouds – ISM: molecules – radio lines: ISM – submillimeter

1. Introduction

In the past decade, astrochemistry has become more and more crucial in understanding the structure and evolution of star forming regions. There are no doubts that stars like our Sun form in gas and dust condensations within molecular clouds and that the process of star formation can only be understood by means of detailed observations of the dust (a good probe of the most abundant and elusive molecule, $H_2$) and molecular lines (unique tools to study kinematics and chemical composition).

Millimeter and submillimeter continuum dust emission observations (see Ward-Thompson et al. 2007, for a detailed review of this topic) are very good probes of the density structure of dense cores, although uncertainties are still present regarding the dust opacity and temperature, both likely to change within centrally concentrated objects (but such variations have so far been hard to quantify observationally, see e.g. Bianchi et al. 2003; Pagani et al. 2003, 2004). Stellar counts in the near-infrared provide an alternative way of measuring the dust (and $H_2$) column and cloud structure (Lada et al. 1994), independent of any variation in dust properties, but they cannot probe regions with extinctions above about 40–50 mag (Alves et al. 1998), i.e. the central zone of very dense cores, such as $L$ 1544, where $A_V \approx 100$ mag within 11$''$ (Ward-Thompson et al. 1999). It appears that many starless cores can be approximated as Bonnor-Ebert spheres (Ebert 1955; Bonnor 1956), with values of the central densities ranging from about $10^5$ cm$^{-3}$ (as in the case of B 68; Alves et al. 2001) to $10^6$ cm$^{-3}$ (for e.g., L 1544, L 183, and L 694-2; Ward-Thompson et al. 1999; Pagani et al. 2003; Harvey et al. 2003).

At the lower end of the central density range, dense cores appear to be isothermal, with gas temperatures close to 10 K (Galli et al. 2002, Tafalla et al. 2004), whereas higher density
cores have clear evidence of temperature drops in the central few thousand AU, with dust temperatures approaching about 7 K (Evans et al. 2001; Pagani et al. 2003, 2004; Schnee & Goodman 2005; Pagani et al. 2007; Crapsi et al. 2007; see also Bergin & Tafalla 2007, for a comprehensive review on starless cores).

Keto & Field (2005) have proposed that the “shallower” cores (such as B 68) are in approximate equilibrium and will not evolve to form protostars, whereas the centrally concentrated ones (such as L 1544) are unstable cores that are proceeding toward gravitational collapse and the formation of protostars. Indeed, this is in agreement with the findings of Lada et al. (2002), who claim that B 68 is oscillating around an equilibrium state, and those of Caselli et al. (2002a) and van der Tak et al. (2005), who studied the kinematic structure of L 1544 and found that it is consistent with contraction in the core nucleus (or central contraction).

To trace the gas properties, NH$_3$ and N$_2$H$^+$ have been extensively used for several years (Benson & Myers 1989) and they seem to quote quite similar conditions, having comparable morphologies and line widths (Benson et al. 1998; Caselli et al. 2002a; Tafalla et al. 2002, 2004), despite the two orders of magnitude difference in the critical densities of the most frequently observed transitions (NH$_3$(1, 1) and N$_2$H$^+$(1−0), see Pagani et al. 2007). These two species are among the few that are left in the gas phase at volume densities above ~10$^5$ cm$^{-3}$. CO, CS, and in general, all the carbon bearing species so far observed (with the exception of CN; Hily-Blant et al. 2008) are heavily affected by freeze-out in the central parts of dense starless cores (Kuiper et al. 1996; Willacy et al. 1998; Caselli et al. 1999; Bergin et al. 2001; Bacmann et al. 2002; Bergin et al. 2002; Caselli et al. 2002b; Tafalla et al. 2002, 2004; Bacmann et al. 2003; Crapsi et al. 2004; Tafalla et al. 2004; Pagani et al. 2005; Crapsi et al. 2005; Tafalla et al. 2006; Pagani et al. 2007). The freeze-out of neutral species (in particular of CO, Dalgarno & Lepp 1984; Roberts & Millar 2000a,b) boosts the deuterium fractionation in species such as N$_2$H$^+$, NH$_3$, H$_2$CO, and HCO$^+$ (see e.g. Butner et al. 1995; Tiné et al. 2000; Caselli et al. 2002b; Bacmann et al. 2003; Crapsi et al. 2005; Lis et al. 2006; Gerin et al. 2006). In star forming cores, in particular in the direction of Class 0 sources, the first protostellar stage (e.g. André et al. 2000), immediately after the pre-stellar phase, the deuterium fractionation is found to be very large (Ceccarelli et al. 1998; Loinard et al. 2002; Lis et al. 2002a,b; van der Tak et al. 2002; Parise et al. 2002; Vastel et al. 2003; Parise et al. 2004; Crapsi et al. 2004; Marcelino et al. 2005; Parise et al. 2006; Ceccarelli et al. 2007; Emprechtinger et al. 2008). This is thought to be the signature of a recent event in which the star forming cloud core experienced the low temperature and high density conditions typical of the most centrally concentrated starless cores. Some deuterated molecules (e.g. deuterated ammonia) are formed in the gas phase (and stored on dust surfaces) whereas others (such as deuterated methanol and formaldehyde) are likely formed onto dust surfaces and are then partially released to the gas phase upon formation (Garrod et al. 2006, 2007). The interaction with the newly born proton protostar can (i) heat dust grains, leading to mantle evaporation (as in Hot Cores and Corinos; Turner 1990; Cazaux et al. 2003; Bottinelli et al. 2004a,b, 2007); and/or (ii) “erode” dust mantles via sputtering in shocks produced by the associated energetic outflows (e.g. Lis et al. 2002a).

Questions that are still open include: (1) N$_2$H$^+$, NH$_3$ and their deuterated forms do trace the inner portions of centrally concentrated cores on the verge of star formation? Although Bergin et al. (2002) and Pagani et al. (2005, 2007) found evidence of depletion in the center of B 68 and L 183, respectively, there are no signs of freeze-out for NH$_3$ in L 1544 (Crapsi et al. 2007) and for both nitrogen bearing species in L 1517B and L 1498 (Tafalla et al. 2004). At densities above ~10$^6$ cm$^{-3}$, the freeze-out time scale is quite short (~1000 yr) and all heavy species are expected to condense onto grain mantles. Moreover, recent laboratory measurements clearly show that N$_2$, the parent species of both NH$_3$ and N$_2$H$^+$ should freeze-out at the same rate as CO (having similar binding energies and sticking probabilities; Öberg et al. 2005; Bisschop et al. 2006). (2) For how long is the high degree of deuterium fractionation observed in starless cores maintained after the formation of a protostellar object?

The detection of strong ortho-H$_2$D$^+$(1$^1_{0,1}$−1$^1_{1,1}$) emission in the direction of L 1544 (Caselli et al. 2005), and the conclusion that H$_2$D$^+$, with its deuterated counterparts, is one of the most abundant molecular ions in core centers, have opened a new way to study the chemical evolution (Roberts et al. 2003, 2004; Walmsley et al. 2004; Flower et al. 2004, 2005, 2006a,b; Aikawa et al. 2005) and the kinematics (van der Tak et al. 2005) of the central few thousand AU of starless cores. Thus, H$_2$D$^+$ is an important tool to understand the chemical and physical properties of the material out of which protoplanetary disks and ultimately planetary systems form.

In the gas phase at temperatures below ~20 K, the deuterium fractionation is mostly regulated by the proton-deuteron exchange reaction:

$$\text{H}_3^+ + \text{HD} \rightarrow \text{H}_2\text{D}^+ + \text{H}_2 + \Delta E,$$

where $\Delta E$ (≥230 K, Millar et al. 1989) prevents the reverse reaction from being fast in cold regions, unless a significant fraction of H$_3^+$ is in the ortho form (Gerlich et al. 2002; Walmsley et al. 2004). Flower et al. (2006a) showed that values of the ortho-to-para (o/p) H$_2$ ratio much higher than 0.03 are inconsistent with the observed high levels of deuteration of the gas (see their Fig. 6). The above reaction, together with the freeze-out of neutral species (which boosts the production rate of H$_2$D$^+$ compared to H$_2^+$; e.g. Aikawa et al. 2001), allows the H$_2$D$^+/\text{H}_2$ ratio to overcome the D/H ratio by several orders of magnitude. Not only has ortho-H$_2$D$^+$(1$^1_{0,1}$−1$^1_{1,1}$) been found to be ~1 K in L 1544, but also deuterated H$_2^+$ has been detected toward another starless condensation (16293E, in Ophiuchus; Vastel et al. 2004). The ortho-H$_2$D$^+$(1$^1_{0,1}$−1$^1_{1,1}$) line has been mapped in L 1544 (Vastel et al. 2006a), finding that the H$_2$D$^+$ emitting region has a radius of about 5000 AU, comparable to the size of the N$_2$D$^+$ (2−1) map made in the same region by Caselli et al. (2002a).

In this paper we present new ortho-H$_2$D$^+$(1$^1_{0,1}$−1$^1_{1,1}$) observations, carried out with the Caltech Submillimeter Observatory (CSO) antenna, in the direction of 10 starless cores and 6 cores associated with very young protostellar objects. As it will be shown, the line has been detected in 7 of the 10 starless cores and in 4 out of 6 star forming cores. In Sect. 2 the observational details are given. Results and ortho-H$_2$D$^+$ spectra are shown in Sect. 3, together with a brief discussion of the upper limits of the para-D$_2$H$^+$(1$^3_{0,0}$−1$^3_{1,1}$) lines (para-H$_2$O(1$^1_{1,1}$−2$^1_{1,0}$) upper limits can be found in the on-line Appendix). H$_2$D$^+$ column densities are derived in Sect. 4. A chemical discussion, aimed at interpreting the observations, is given in Sect. 5 and conclusions are in Sect. 6.

2. Observations

2.1. Technical details

Observations of the ortho-H$_2$D$^+$(1$^1_{0,0}$−1$^1_{1,1}$) line ($\nu_0$ = 372.421385(10) GHz; Amano & Hirao 2005) were carried
out with the Caltech Submillimeter Observatory (CSO) on Mauna Kea (Hawaii), between October 2002 and April 2005. The spectra were taken in wobbler switching mode, with a chop throw of 300″. The backend used was an acousto-optical spectrometer (AOS) with 50 MHz bandwidth. The velocity resolution, as measured from a frequency comb scan, is 0.1 km s⁻¹. The beam efficiency (η₀) at ν = 372 GHz was measured on Saturn, Mars and Jupiter and is listed in Table 2. Measurements for extended sources were made for only a few sources (L 1544, L 183, NGC 1333–DCO⁺, B 1, NGC 2264G-VLA2) and were found to be ∼70%, compared to 60% for planets measurements. H₂D⁺ is likely to be extended (e.g. L 1544; Vastel et al. 2006a; L 183; Vastel et al. 2006b). Consequently, we used the extended source beam efficiency whenever available. However the difference is not highly significant. At 372 GHz, the CSO 10.4-m antenna has a half power beamwidth of about 22″.

Similar setups were used for the para-H₂O(1⁻→0⁻) line at 307.1924100 GHz (JPL catalogue to be found at http://spec.jpl.nasa.gov/), which was observed at CSO in October 2002 and June 2003. Table A.1 presents the beam efficiencies that were used for H₂O⁺ data. Pointing was measured every two hours and found to be better than 3″.

Observations of the para-D₂H⁺ (1,0,0–1,0,0) line (ν = 691.6626423(20) GHz; Amano & Hirao 2005) were carried out at CSO between April 2003 and April 2005 under very good weather conditions (225 GHz zenith opacity less than 0.065). We used the 50 MHz AOS with a spectral resolution better than 0.04 km s⁻¹. The observations were performed using the wobbler with a chop throw between 150″ and 180″ according to its stability. The beam efficiency was carefully and regularly checked on Mars, Venus, Saturn and Jupiter, and found to be ∼40%. For more extended sources, the beam efficiency was measured to be ∼60%. This value has been adopted for 16293E, the only source we used with a chop throw of 300″. The backend used was an acousto-optical spectrometer (AOS) with 50 MHz bandwidth. The velocity resolution and column density upper limit uncertainties were carefully and regularly checked (http://spec.jpl.nasa.gov/).

We used the 50 MHz AOS with a spectral resolution better than 0.04 km s⁻¹. This value has been adopted for 16293E, the only source we used with a chop throw of 300″. The backend used was an acousto-optical spectrometer (AOS) with 50 MHz bandwidth. The velocity resolution was carefully and regularly checked (http://spec.jpl.nasa.gov/).

For the other sources, we use η₀ = 40% (Table 4) and consider a factor of 1.5 uncertainty in the column density upper limit due to the unknown source size. Pointing was monitored every 1.5 h and found to be better than 3″. At 692 GHz, the CSO 10.4-m antenna has a half power beamwidth of about 11″.

### 2.2. Source selection

The source list is given in Table 1, which reports the coordinates, the Local Standard of Rest velocity (V₁₅₀₀₉º) at which we centered our spectra, and the distance to the source.

The selection criteria for starless cores is similar to those described in Crapsi et al. (2005), where sources with bright continuum and N₂H⁺ emission have been selected to include chemically evolved cores, where CO is significantly frozen onto dust grains and where H₂D⁺ is thus expected to be more abundant. The sample consists of "shallow" cores, with central densities of ∼10⁵ cm⁻³ (L 1498, TMC-2, L 1517B, B 68) and more centrally concentrated ones, with central densities of ∼10⁶ cm⁻³ (TMC-1C, L 1544, L 183, Oph D, L 429 and L 694-2).

The star forming regions observed have been selected as being representative of the early phases of protostellar evolution, so that any detection of H₂D⁺ can be compared with starless cores to see if any evolutionary trends appear. Among the protostellar cores we selected:

1. NGC 1333 DCO⁺, close to IRAS 4A, in Perseus, where large abundances of deuterated species have been observed (ND₂⁺, van der Tak et al. 2002; NH₂D⁺, Hatchell 2003; D₂S⁺, Vastel et al. 2003; ND₂H⁺, Roueff et al. 2005).
2. B 1, one of the highest column density cores in the Perseus Complex, with active low-mass star formation going on (e.g. Hirano et al. 1999) and with large deuterium fractionations, as shown by the detection of triply deuterated ammonia (ND₂⁺, Lis et al. 2002b, 2006), doubly deuterated hydrogen sulfide (D₂S⁺, Vastel et al. 2003), and doubly deuterated thioformaldehyde (D₂CS, Marcelino et al. 2005).
3. IRAM 04191, a very low luminosity Class 0 source in Taurus, driving a powerful outflow, but embedded in a dense core which appears to maintain many of the starless core characteristics (Belloche & André 2004).
4. L 1521F, initially selected as a starless core with a chemical and physical structure similar to L 1544 (but different kinematics; Crapsi et al. 2004), and recently found associated with a L < 0.07 Lₒ protostellar object, thanks to the high sensitivity of the Spitzer Space Telescope (Bourke et al. 2006).
5. Ori B9, a massive dense core in Orion B, with peculiarly narrow molecular line widths and low gas temperature (Lada et al. 1991; Harju et al. 1993; Caselli & Myers 1995), thus an ideal target (among massive cores) to detect deuterated species.
6. NGC2264-VLA2, studied by, e.g., Ward-Thompson et al. (1995), who found the Class 0 driving source of the bipolar outflows, Girart et al. (2000), who determined the gas temperature and volume density of the surrounding core, and by Loinard et al. (2002), who observed D₂CO and found an extremely large deuterium fractionation ([D₂CO]/[H₂CO] = 0.4, equivalent to an enrichment over the cosmic D/H ratio of more than 9 orders of magnitude).

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. ortho-H₂D⁺(1,0,0–1,1,1)

The ortho-H₂D⁺(1,0,0–1,1,1) spectra are shown in Fig. 1, and the results of Gaussian fits to the lines are listed in Table 2. One

### Table 1. Source sample.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source name</th>
<th>RA(J2000) [h m s]</th>
<th>Dec(J2000) [° ° ′ ″]</th>
<th>V_{LSR} [km s⁻¹]</th>
<th>Distance [pc]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L 1498</td>
<td>04 10:34:03</td>
<td>+25 10:16:12</td>
<td>7.80</td>
<td>140</td>
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<tr>
<td>TMC-2</td>
<td>04 10:34:03</td>
<td>+24 23:32:56</td>
<td>6.10</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TMC-1C</td>
<td>04 11:38:01</td>
<td>+26 01:29:18</td>
<td>5.20</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 1517B</td>
<td>04 55:00:00</td>
<td>+30 37:43:84</td>
<td>5.80</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 183</td>
<td>15 54:08:56</td>
<td>+32 52:48:99</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B 68</td>
<td>17 22:38:64</td>
<td>+23 49:46:03</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 429</td>
<td>18 17:55:53</td>
<td>-08 32:99:44</td>
<td>6.82</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 694-2</td>
<td>19 41:05:03</td>
<td>+10 57:01:99</td>
<td>9.60</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGC 1333 DCO⁺</td>
<td>03 29:12:10</td>
<td>+31 13:26:30</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B 1</td>
<td>03 33:20:84</td>
<td>+31 07:34:27</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRAM 04191</td>
<td>04 21:56:91</td>
<td>+15 29:46:10</td>
<td>6.60</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 1521F</td>
<td>04 28:39:80</td>
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<td>6.48</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ori B9</td>
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<td>-01 15:11:76</td>
<td>9.10</td>
<td>450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGC 2264G-VLA2</td>
<td>06 41:11:09</td>
<td>+09 55:59:01</td>
<td>8.00</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a) Embedded low luminosity object recently detected by Spitzer (Bourke et al. 2006).
whereas the vertical dashed line marks the non-thermal line width, defined as (see Myers et al. 1991):

$$\Delta v_{\text{NT}} = \sqrt{\Delta v_{\text{obs}}^2 - \Delta v_{\text{T}}^2},$$

(2)

where $\Delta v_{\text{obs}}$ (or $\Delta v$ in Table 2) is the observed line width and $\Delta v_{\text{T}}$ is the thermal linewidth of the observed molecule, calculated assuming the kinetic temperatures listed in Col. 3 of Table 3. The ortho-H$_2$D$^+$($1_{0,0}-1_{1,1}$) non-thermal line width is on average two times larger than that derived from the N$_2$D$^+$(2−1) data of Crapsi et al. (2005) (using the same kinetic temperature), the only exception being B 68, where both the N$_2$D$^+$(2−1) and ortho-H$_2$D$^+$($1_{0,0}-1_{1,1}$) lines are totally thermally broadened. The larger non-thermal line widths (and the moderate optical depths, see Sect. 4) indicate that the ortho-H$_2$D$^+$ lines are tracing a region within the cores with more prominent internal motions than the N$_2$D$^+$(2−1) lines, even in L 1544, where the emission of these two lines has the same morphology and extension (Vastel et al. 2006a).

In the category of “shallow” cores, we have 3 non detections among 4 objects. The only shallow core detected in our survey is L 1517B, which is in fact the most compact and centrally concentrated of its class and has one of the narrowest H$_2$D$^+$ lines observed so far (together with the denser core Oph D): 0.4 km s$^{-1}$, only 1.2 times larger than the H$_2$D$^+$ thermal line width at 10 K, as measured with NH$_3$ observations (Tafalla et al. 2004). Observations carried out with the APEX telescope revealed a probable ortho-H$_2$D$^+$ emission in one of our non-detected shallow cores, B 68 (Hogerheijde et al. 2006). The detected line is indeed relatively faint ($T_{\text{mb}} = 0.2$ K), very narrow (0.3 km s$^{-1}$, practically thermal), and consistent with our non-detection ($T_{\text{th}} = 0.3$ K, see Table 2). The observations of the other two objects in this group (L 1498, TMC-2) have better sensitivities ($T_{\text{ms}} = 0.13$ K), but they may still hide the H$_2$D$^+$ line if its intensity is similar to the one in B 68.

Among the five most centrally concentrated objects in the starless core sample, four show strong ($T_{\text{mb}} = 0.7-0.9$ K) H$_2$D$^+$ emission, whereas TMC-1C has $T_{\text{mb}} = 0.4$ K. The line widths span the range between 0.5 km s$^{-1}$ (for Oph D) and 0.7 km s$^{-1}$ (for L 429), possibly reflecting contraction motions in different stages of core evolution or large optical depths (although a simple analysis seems to discard this last hypothesis; see Sect. 4).

In the six (young) protostellar cores, the detection rate is quite high, with four H$_2$D$^+$ lines detected. L 1521F has a line shape similar to that in L 1544 ($\Delta v = 0.5$ km s$^{-1}$), but the brightness temperature is 1.7 times lower, in agreement with the two times lower deuterium fractionation observed ($N(\text{N}_2\text{D})/N(\text{N}_2\text{H}^+)$) = 0.1 and 0.2, in L 1521F and L 1544, respectively; Crapsi et al. 2004; Caselli et al. 2002a). B 1 and NGC 1333–DCO$^+$ present the largest linewidth in the sample, suggesting that the active star formation is probably injecting energy in the form of non-thermal motions and turbulence. We are confident that the broad line in NGC 1333–DCO$^+$ is not a baseline artifact, in particular because both the centroid velocity and the linewidth are coincident (within the errors) with those observed in D$_2$S by Vastel et al. (2003) (but not with the ND$_3$ line observed by van der Tak et al. 2002, which remains a puzzle). The H$_2$D$^+$ line in NGC 2264G is narrower than in B 1 and NGC 1333–DCO$^+$ and more similar to L 1521F, probably indicating that the circumstellar environment is still quite pristine.

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**Fig. 1.** ortho-H$_2$D$^+$($1_{0,0}-1_{1,1}$) spectra toward the 16 sources of our sample. The units are main beam brightness temperature in K (y-axis, assuming a unity filling factor) and velocity in km s$^{-1}$ (x-axis). A star in the top right indicates dense cores associated with protostellar objects. The vertical dotted line is the $V_{\text{LSR}}$ velocity measured with N$_2$H$^+$(1−0), whereas the vertical dashed line marks $V_{\text{LSR}}$ as measured with the present H$_2$D$^+$ observations. Within the uncertainties, the two values are identical. Note that the strongest emission is present in the densest starless cores (L 1544, L 183, L 429, L 694-2) and in the star forming regions L 1521F, B 1, and NGC 2264G. Note also the large variation in linewidth among the various sources.
In this section we estimate the average ortho-H$_2$D$^+$ column densities listed in Table 3. The estimated values are well within those calculated by Flower et al. (2004, see their Fig. 7) for cloud cores with volume densities $n_0 = 10^5$ cm$^{-3}$ and temperature ranges between 10 and 15 K.

### 4. Analysis

#### 4.1. Derivation of the average ortho-H$_2$D$^+$ column densities

In this section we estimate the average ortho-H$_2$D$^+$ column density in each source, assuming that the line is emitted in homogeneous spheres at the density and temperature quoted in the literature and reported in Table 3. Values of the H$_2$ column densities are also reported in Table 3, Col. 5, and they are used to determine the fractional abundance of ortho-H$_2$D$^+$ (see Sect. 4.3). The $N$(H$_2$) values for L 1544, L 429 and L 694-2 have been determined by Crapsi et al. (2005) assuming constant temperature. However, a temperature gradient has been measured toward L 1544 (Crapsi et al. 2007) and assumed (because of the similar physical structure) in L 429 and L 694-2, so that $N$(H$_2$) needs to be modified. As found by Pagani et al. (2004) and Stamatellos et al. (2007), the temperature drop in L 183 and Oph D implies an increase in $N$(H$_2$) by a factor of about 1.4. Given that L 1544, L 429 and L 694-2 have structures similar to L 183 and Oph D, we simply multiplied the Crapsi et al. (2005) values by the same correction factor (1.4) to account for the temperature gradient, as reported in Table 3.

We further assume that the level structure of the ortho-H$_2$D$^+$ molecule is reduced to a two-level system. This is especially justified in starless cores, considering that the first excited state is 17.4 K above ground and the second one is 110 K. In star forming regions, we assume that the observed H$_2$D$^+$ line arises from gas with characteristics not significantly different from starless cores (which is probably true in L 1521F and NGC 2264–VLA2, see Sect. 3). In the case of B 1 and NGC 1333–DCO$^+$, the broad lines suggest that the embedded young stellar objects have probably increased the degree of turbulence in the region and may have locally altered the conditions where H$_2$D$^+$ emits. However, we should point out that where the gas temperature increases above 20 K, and/or where shocks are present, H$_2$D$^+$ should not survive for long, considering that in these conditions the backward reaction (1) can quickly proceed and that dust mantles can be either evaporated or sputtered back into the gas phase, with the consequence of increasing the CO abundance and thus the destruction rate of H$_2$D$^+$.

To estimate the average ortho-H$_2$D$^+$ column density, we evaluate the excitation temperature $T_{ex}$ and the line optical...
Table 3. ortho-H$_2$D$^+$ column densities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source name</th>
<th>n(H$_2$) (cm$^{-3}$)</th>
<th>$T_{\text{kin}}$ (K)</th>
<th>Ref.</th>
<th>N(H$_2$)$^b$ (10$^{13}$ cm$^{-2}$)</th>
<th>Ref.</th>
<th>$T_{\text{ex}}$ (K)</th>
<th>τ$^c$</th>
<th>N(ortho-H$_2$D$^+$)$^f$ (10$^{15}$ cm$^{-2}$)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L 1498</td>
<td>$1 \times 10^4$</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7.5, 5.5</td>
<td>&lt;0.3, &lt;0.9</td>
<td>&lt;0.7, &lt;2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TMC-2</td>
<td>$3 \times 10^4$</td>
<td>10$^d$</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8.7, 5.9</td>
<td>&lt;0.2, &lt;0.6</td>
<td>&lt;0.5, &lt;1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TMC-1C</td>
<td>$1 \times 10^5$</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6.8, 6.0</td>
<td>0.4, 0.6</td>
<td>0.9, 1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 1517B</td>
<td>$2 \times 10^5$</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8.0, 5.6</td>
<td>0.2, 0.9</td>
<td>0.4, 1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 1544</td>
<td>$2 \times 10^6$</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.9, 6.5</td>
<td>1.2, 1.7</td>
<td>3.2, 4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 183</td>
<td>$2 \times 10^6$</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7.5, 5.9</td>
<td>1.1, 1.6</td>
<td>2.5, 3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oph D</td>
<td>$5 \times 10^4$</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.8, 5.8</td>
<td>0.8, 2.0</td>
<td>1.6, 4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B 6$^e$</td>
<td>$3 \times 10^4$</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>24, 13</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7.5, 5.9</td>
<td>0.1, 0.3</td>
<td>0.2, 0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 429</td>
<td>$6 \times 10^5$</td>
<td>7$^d$</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.8, 6.3</td>
<td>1.1, 1.8</td>
<td>4.1, 6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 694-2</td>
<td>$9 \times 10^5$</td>
<td>7$^d$</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.9, 6.3</td>
<td>1.1, 2.0</td>
<td>3.2, 5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16293E$^f$</td>
<td>$2 \times 10^6$</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>12, 10</td>
<td>0.5, 0.7</td>
<td>1.2, 1.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. p-D$_2$H$^+$ column density upper limits.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source Name</th>
<th>$\Delta v_{\text{ms}}$ (km/s)</th>
<th>$T_{\text{sys}}$ (K)</th>
<th>$t_{\text{tot}}$ (min)</th>
<th>$T_{\text{ms}}$ (K)</th>
<th>$T_{\text{R}}$ (K)</th>
<th>$\eta_{\text{h}}$</th>
<th>$T_{\text{ex}}$ (K)</th>
<th>N(p-D$_2$H$^+$) (10$^{13}$ cm$^{-2}$)</th>
<th>$\rho/\sigma$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B 1</td>
<td>0.083</td>
<td>3990</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>0.068</td>
<td>&lt;0.20</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>&lt;0.3</td>
<td>&lt;1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGC 1333-DCO$^b$</td>
<td>0.083</td>
<td>3300</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>0.068</td>
<td>&lt;0.20</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>&lt;0.9</td>
<td>&lt;2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGC 2264-VLA2 $^a$</td>
<td>0.021</td>
<td>1436</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>0.045</td>
<td>&lt;0.14</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>&lt;0.2</td>
<td>&lt;0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 183</td>
<td>0.042</td>
<td>1770</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>0.034</td>
<td>&lt;0.25</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>&lt;7.9</td>
<td>&lt;3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16293E$^d$</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>1.2 ± 0.5</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 1544$^c$</td>
<td>0.021</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>&lt;0.54</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>&lt;2.5</td>
<td>&lt;0.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$^a$ In radiation temperature units; $^b$ excitation temperature assuming a critical density of 10$^5$ cm$^{-3}$ for the observed D$_2$H$^+$ transition; $^c$ $\rho/\sigma = N(\text{para-D}_2\text{H}^+)/N(\text{ortho-D}_2\text{H}^+)$; $^d$ data from Vastel et al. (2004). The column density has been estimated using the method described in the text; $^e$ data from Vastel et al. (2006a). The column density has been estimated using the method described in the text, with the parameters listed in Table 3.

depth $\tau$ simultaneously, by solving iteratively the following equations (valid for $T_{\text{bg}} \ll E_{\text{al}}/k$):

$$T_{\text{ex}} = \frac{T_{\text{kin}}}{E_{\text{al}}} \ln \left( 1 + \frac{\Delta v_{\text{ms}}}{n_{\text{ex}}} + 1 \right)$$

(3)

$$\beta = \frac{0.75}{\tau} \left( 1 + \frac{e^{-2\tau}}{\tau} + \frac{(e^{-2\tau} - 1)}{2\tau^2} \right)$$

(4)

Eq. (3) is the definition of $T_{\text{ex}}$ corrected for the line opacity: in practice, the critical density is reduced by the probability that the emitted photon can indeed escape absorption. We adopted the photon escape probability $\beta$ of Eq. (4), valid for a homogeneous sphere (Osterbrock 1989). Finally the line optical depth $\tau$
is derived from the observation via Eq. (5). In the above equations, \( E_{\text{al}} \) is the energy of the transition (\( E_{\text{al}}/k_B = 17.4 \) K, with \( k_B \) the Boltzmann constant), \( n_{\text{col}} \) is the particle volume density (assumed to be \( 1.2 \times n(H_2) \), to account for He), \( T_{\text{kin}} \) is the gas temperature, and \( J_e(T_{\text{ex}}) \) and \( J_e(T_{\text{bg}}) \) are the equivalent Rayleigh-Jeans excitation and background temperatures.

The ortho-\( H_2D^+ \) column density is then derived from \( \tau \):

\[
N(\text{ortho-}H_2D^+) = \frac{8\pi\nu^3}{c^3} \frac{Q(T_{\text{ex}})}{g_{\text{rot}}E_{\text{al}}} \frac{e^{E_{\text{al}}/T_{\text{ex}}}}{e^{E_{\text{al}}/T_{\text{ex}}} - 1} \int \tau \, d\nu. \tag{6}
\]

A key parameter is the critical density \( n_c \) of the transition. Recent unpublished calculations by Hugo & Schlemmer (private communication) suggest a collisional coefficient with ortho and para \( H_2 \) of \( \sim 10^{-9} \text{ cm}^3 \text{s}^{-1} \) at \( 10 \) K, with a very shallow dependence on the temperature. The implied critical density is \( \sim 10^5 \text{ cm}^{-3} \), namely a factor of 10 lower than assumed in previous work (Black et al. 1990; van der Tak et al. 2005). The ortho-\( H_2D^+ \) column densities, calculated both with the new and old critical density values, are reported in Table 3. The lines are either optically thin (e.g. in B 68) or marginally thick (\( \sim 1 \), in L 1544, L 183, L 694-2, L 429). From the table, it is clear that a factor of 10 in the collisional coefficient implies a change in the column density value of factors between 1.4 and 4.5, depending on the volume density and kinetic temperature. In the following analysis we use the column densities calculated with the \( 10^5 \text{ cm}^{-3} \) critical density.

The four objects that show the largest values of \( N(\text{ortho-H}_2\text{D}^+) \) are among the most centrally concentrated cores in the sample: L 429, L 1544, L 694-2 and L 183. The two other dense cores, TMC-1C and Oph D have significantly lower ortho-\( H_2D^+ \) column densities, and this may be related to different evolutionary stages. We will further discuss these issues in Sect. 5.

4.2. Evaluation of the errors

The estimates of the ortho-\( H_2D^+ \) column densities reported in Table 3 suffer from several sources of uncertainties. We already mentioned a basic source of uncertainty, that associated with the collisional coefficient of the transition. In addition to that, the densities and temperatures used to derive the excitation temperatures are also relatively uncertain, not only because of the uncertainty in deriving these values at the centers of the studied sources but also because the \( H_2D^+ \) line emission may originate in regions that are denser than the quoted average density gas due to the \( H_2D^+ \) abundance distribution. In this context, the errors associated with the rms of the observations reported in Table 2 are certainly the smallest in the error propagation chain. Although it is difficult to exactly quantify the error in the determination of the ortho-\( H_2D^+ \) column densities, we estimate here how reasonable changes in the gas temperature and density would affect the reported column densities. Increasing or decreasing the density by a factor of 2 results in decreasing/increasing the ortho-\( H_2D^+ \) column densities by less than 30%. However, a change in the kinetic temperatures of Table 3 by 1 K would change the ortho-\( H_2D^+ \) column densities by up to a factor of 2 in the coldest objects (because of the exponential in the level population equation).

In summary, considering also the beam efficiency variation between 0.4 and 0.7 (Table 2), the ortho-\( H_2D^+ \) column densities reported in Table 3 are likely to be uncertain by about a factor of \( \sim 2 \).

4.3. Correlations

We have looked for possible correlations between the column density or fractional abundance of ortho-\( H_2D^+ \) and physical parameters such as the volume density, the \( H_2 \) column density, the kinetic temperature and the non-thermal line width. No significant correlations have been found, with the exception of \( x(\text{ortho-H}_2\text{D}^+)/N(\text{H}_2) \) vs. \( T_{\text{kin}} \), for which we find (see Fig. 2):

\[
\log x(\text{ortho-H}_2\text{D}^+) = (-8.6 \pm 0.3) - (0.16 \pm 0.03)T_{\text{kin}}, \tag{7}
\]

with a correlation coefficient of \( -0.83 \). What is causing the ortho-\( H_2D^+ \) drop observed between 7 K and 15 K? Partially, this may be due to the fact that the warmest sources: (i) may have a smaller ortho-\( H_2D^+ \) emitting region than found in L 1544 (about 60"; Vastel et al. 2006a), because of a drop of the ortho-\( H_2D^+ \) abundance (see Fig. 6 of Flower et al. 2004) and (ii) are all at distances \( >300 \) pc (with the exception of 16293E, which follows the trend). Thus, the \( H_2D^+ \) emission may be affected by beam dilution (not considered in this study). However, as we will see in the next section, variations in the CO depletion factor, linked to the gas density and, in turn, to the gas and dust temperature (at least in starless cores, larger temperatures are typically associated with lower gas densities, lower CO depletion factors, and lower deuterium-fractionations), can also (at least partially) produce the observed trend. In any case, a more detailed physical and chemical structure (such as that recently developed by Aikawa et al. 2008) is needed to investigate these points, although the lack of information on the extent and morphology of the \( H_2D^+ \) emission prevents us from a more quantitative analysis of the correlations between the gas traced by \( H_2D^+ \) and the physical properties of the selected cores.

In the following we will concentrate on molecular abundances and use both a simple chemical model applied to a homogeneous cloud and a slightly more detailed chemical-physical model of a centrally concentrated and spherically symmetric cloud to reproduce and interpret the observed variations of ortho-\( H_2D^+ \) column densities, deuterium fractionation and CO depletion fraction in the selected cores.

5. Chemical discussion

The chemistry of starless cores and their degree of deuteration has been investigated in detail by Roberts et al. (2003),
Table 5. The forward rate coefficient is given by \( a(T/300)^\beta \). The reverse rate is given by \( a(T/300)^\gamma e^{-\gamma/T} \).

\[
\begin{array}{cccccc}
\text{Reaction} & \text{Rate} & a & \beta & \gamma & \text{Ref.} \\
\hline
H_2^+ + HD & \rightarrow H_2D^+ + H_2 & k_1, k_1 & 1.7 \times 10^{-9} & 0 & 220 & (1) \\
H_2D^+ + HD & \rightarrow D_2H^+ + H_2 & k_2, k_2 & 8.1 \times 10^{-10} & 0 & 187 & \text{Roberts et al. (2004)} \\
D_2H^+ + HD & \rightarrow D_2H^+ + H_2 & k_3, k_3 & 6.4 \times 10^{-10} & 0 & 234 & \text{Roberts et al. (2004)} \\
H_2D^+ + CO & \rightarrow HCO^+ + HD & k_{CO} & 1.7 \times 10^{-9} & 0 & 0 & \text{RATE06} \\
H_2D^+ + CO & \rightarrow HCO^+ + HD & k_{CO} & 1.7 \times 10^{-9} & 0 & 0 & \text{RATE06} \\
D_2H^+ + CO & \rightarrow DCO^+ + H_2 & k_{CO} & 1.7 \times 10^{-9} & 0 & 0 & \text{RATE06} \\
D_2H^+ + CO & \rightarrow DCO^+ + D_2 & k_{CO} & 1.7 \times 10^{-9} & 0 & 0 & \text{RATE06} \\
D_2^+ + CO & \rightarrow DCO^+ + D_2 & k_{CO} & 1.7 \times 10^{-9} & 0 & 0 & \text{RATE06} \\
H_2D^+ + e^- & \rightarrow \text{products} & k_{rec1} & 6.0 \times 10^{-8} & -0.5 & 0 & \text{Sundström et al. (1994)} \\
H_2D^+ + e^- & \rightarrow \text{products} & k_{rec2} & 6.0 \times 10^{-8} & -0.5 & 0 & \text{Roberts et al. (2004)} \\
D_2H^+ + e^- & \rightarrow \text{products} & k_{rec3} & 2.7 \times 10^{-8} & -0.5 & 0 & \text{Larsson et al. (1997)} \\
\end{array}
\]

(1) At the low temperatures found in our starless and protostellar cores, this rate corresponds to the Langevin limit.

5.1. Simple theory: what affects deuterium fractionation

Ignoring for the moment the density and temperature structure of molecular cloud cores and any gas-dust interaction, which will be considered in Sect. 5.2, we show here simple relations between the \( H_2D^+/H_2^+ \) abundance ratio and parameters such as the gas kinetic temperature, the grain size distribution, the CO depletion factor and the cosmic-ray ionization rate. We use a simple chemical network which includes all the multiply deuterated forms of \( H_2^+ \), formed following the reaction scheme listed in Table 5 and destroyed by CO, electrons (dissociative recombination) and negatively charged dust grains (recombination). The adopted rate coefficients are the same as in Table 1 of Ceccarelli & Dominik (2005), with the exception of the reaction of \( H_2^+ \) and deuterated isotopologues with CO, and the reaction of \( H_2^+ \) and electrons, for which we used the values listed in the latest release of the UMIST database (RATE06) available at http://www.udfa.net/. We note that the rate coefficient of the \( H_2^+ + CO \) reaction in the UMIST database is temperature-independent, as expected for ion-molecule reactions where the neutral species has a small dipole moment (Herbst, private communication).

The steady state equations for this simple system are:

\[
\begin{align}
\frac{dx(H_2D^+)}{dt} & = k_1 x(\text{HD})[D_2D_1 - x(\text{HD})k_3,k_3] \\
\frac{dx(H_2^+)}{dt} & = k_2 x(\text{HD})D_3 \\
\frac{dx(D_2H^+)}{dt} & = k_3 x(\text{HD})D_3 \\
\frac{dx(D_2^+)}{dt} & = k_4 x(\text{HD})D_3 \\
\frac{dx(D_2^+)}{dt} & = k_5 x(\text{HD})D_3 \\
\end{align}
\]

In the above expressions, \( k_1, k_2, k_3, k_4, k_5 \) are the forward and backward rate coefficients relative to reactions of \( H_2^+, H_2D^+, \) and \( D_2H^+ \) with HD; \( x(i) \) is the fractional abundance (w.r.t. \( H_2 \)) of species \( i \); \( x(\text{HD}) = 3 \times 10^{-5} \) is the fractional abundance of HD (assuming that \( [D]/[H] = 1.5 \times 10^{-5} \), Oliveira et al. 2003, and that in molecular clouds the deuterium is mainly in the form of HD); \( k_{\text{CO}} \) is the rate coefficient of the...
Fig. 3. [H$_2$D$^+$/H$_3^+$], [D$_2$H$^+$/H$_3^+$], [D$_3^+$]/[H$_3^+$] and R$_D$ abundance ratios as a function of the gas temperature ($T_{\text{kin}}$) in a dense cloud with uniform volume density $n$(H$_2$) = 10$^5$ cm$^{-3}$. (Top row) The abundance ratios are plotted against $T_{\text{kin}}$ for different values of the depletion factor $f_D$ (=1, 5, 10, 50 and 100), with fixed values of $a_{\text{min}} = 50$ Å and $\zeta = 3 \times 10^{-17}$ s$^{-1}$. The dotted curves are for $f_D = 10$ clouds with $n$(H$_2$) = 1 $\times$ 10$^6$ cm$^{-3}$ (top dotted curve) and $n$(H$_2$) = 1 $\times$ 10$^5$ cm$^{-3}$ (bottom dotted curve). Note the large increase of the [D$_3^+$]/[H$_3^+$] ratio for $f_D = 50$ and 100. (Central panel) Abundance ratios vs. $T_{\text{kin}}$ for different values of $a_{\text{min}}$ and values of $f_D$ and $\zeta$ fixed at 10 and 3 $\times$ 10$^{-17}$ s$^{-1}$, respectively. (Bottom panel) Abundance ratios vs. $T_{\text{kin}}$ for different values of the cosmic-ray ionization rate, $\zeta$. Here, $f_D = 10$ and $a_{\text{min}} = 50$ Å.

destruction reaction of all H$_3^+$ isotopologues with CO; $x$(CO) = $x_{\text{can}}$(CO)/$f_D$, where $x_{\text{can}}$(CO) = 9.5 $\times$ 10$^{-5}$ is the canonical abundance of CO as measured by Frerking et al. (1982), and $f_D$ is the CO depletion factor (1/$f_D$ is the fraction of CO molecules left in the gas phase, see Sect. 5.2.2); $k_{\text{rec1}}, k_{\text{rec2}}, k_{\text{rec3}}$ are the dissociative recombination rate coefficients for H$_2$D$^+$, D$_2$H$^+$, and D$_3^+$, respectively. Following Draine & Sutin (1987; see also Crapsi et al. 2004), the rate coefficient for the recombination onto dust grains has the form:

$$k_g = 1.6 \times 10^{-7} \left( \frac{a_{\text{min}}}{10^{-8} \text{cm}} \right)
\times \left( \frac{T_{\text{kin}}}{10 \text{ K}} \right)^{-0.5}
\times \left( \frac{a_{\text{min}}}{10 \text{ K} 10^{-5} \text{cm}} \right)^{-0.5}
\times \left( \frac{a_{\text{max}}}{2.5 \times 10^{-5} \text{cm}} \right)^{-2.5}
\times \left( \frac{a_{\text{max}}}{5 \times 10^{-6} \text{cm}} \right)^{-2.5},$$

where $a_{\text{min}}$ (=50 Å) is the minimum radius of dust grains in the Mathis et al. (1977) (MRN) size distribution ($a_{\text{max}}$ = 2.5 $\times$ 10$^{-5}$ cm). Finally, the fractional abundance ($x_g$) of dust grains in a MRN size distribution is given by:

$$x_g = 5.3 \times 10^{-6} \left( \frac{a_{\text{max}}}{10^{-8} \text{cm}} \right)^{-0.5}
\times \left( \frac{a_{\text{min}}}{10 \text{ K} 10^{-5} \text{cm}} \right)^{-2.5}$$

The electron fraction is calculated as in Caselli et al. (2002b) using a simplified version of the reaction scheme of Umebayashi & Nakano (1990) where we compute a generic abundance of molecular ions “mH+” assuming formation due to proton transfer with H$_3^+$ and destruction by dissociative recombination on grain surfaces (using rates from Draine & Sutin 1987). H$_3^+$ is formed as a consequence of cosmic-ray ionization of H$_2$ and destroyed by proton transfer with CO and N$_2$. Metals are also taken into account and their fractional abundance has been assumed to be 10$^{-7}$ (following the initial abundances of “low-metal” models, appropriate for dark clouds; Lee et al. 1996).

The deuterium fractionation in species such as HCO$^+$ or N$_2$H$^+$ ($R_D \equiv [\text{DCO}^+]/[\text{HCO}^+]$ or [N$_2$D$^+$]/[N$_2$H$^+$]) in this chemical scheme is simply given by:

$$R_D = \frac{1/3x(H_2D^+) + 2/3x(D_2H^+) + x(D_3^+)}{x(H_3^+) + 2/3x(H_2D^+) + 1/3x(D_2H^+)}$$

Figure 3 shows the [H$_2$D$^+$]/[H$_3^+$], [D$_2$H$^+$]/[H$_3^+$], [D$_3^+$]/[H$_3^+$] and $R_D$ abundance ratios as a function of gas temperature, for different values of the depletion factor $f_D$ (top panel), the minimum value of the dust grain radius in the grain-size distribution,
if adopted, lead to... 

In this section, our estimates of ortho-H$_2$D$^+$ column densities are correlated with the deuterium fractionation and the depletion factors, previously measured in the same objects, and simple chemical models are used to investigate the observed variations among the various sources. The model used is similar to that described in Vastel et al. (2006a) and first applied by Caselli et al. (2002b) in the case of L 1544, but with the deuterium fractionation chemistry and rate coefficients as described in the previous sub-section. We consider a spherical cloud with a given density and temperature profile where dust and gas are present. Initially (besides H$_2$), CO and N$_2$ are present in the...
gas phase with abundances of $9.5 \times 10^{-5}$ (Ferking et al. 1982) and $3.75 \times 10^{-5}$, respectively. The abundance of N$_2$ assumes that 50% of the nitrogen is in the atomic form (but no nitrogen chemistry is considered, except for the N$_2$ adsorption/desorption onto/from dust grains and the formation and destruction of N$_2$H$^+$ and N$_2$D$^+$). This is a totally arbitrary choice, but the N$_2$ abundance is extremely uncertain (see e.g. Stepiak et al. 2003; Flower et al. 2006b; Maret et al. 2006) and in any case, its variation in the gas phase only affects, in our simple model, the absolute abundance of N$_2$H$^+$, significantly affecting the N$_2$D$^+/N_2$H$^+$ column density ratio. Atomic oxygen has not been included in the chemistry in order to avoid one extra (uncertain) parameter in the model. Adding atomic oxygen to the chemical network lowers the deuteration fractionation if its binding energy (also not well constrained) is sufficiently low (see e.g. Caselli et al. 2002b, and their discussion in Sect. 3.2).

The dust grain distribution follows MRN and we assume a gas-to-dust mass ratio of 100. However, the size of the minimum dust radius, $a_{\text{min}}$, has been increased by an order of magnitude, following recent (indirect) evidence of grain growth toward the center of dense cores (e.g. Flower et al. 2005; Bergin et al. 2006; Flower et al. 2006b; Vastel et al. 2006a). The higher $a_{\text{min}}$ adopted here ($5 \times 10^{-6}$ cm) lowers the freeze-out rate by a factor of 5 compared to the MRN value (by changing the surface area of dust grains), and it is the “best-fit” value for the L 1544 chemical model (see Caselli et al. 2002b; Vastel et al. 2006a). The freeze-out time scale of species i ($t_{\text{freeze}}(i)$) is given by:

$$t_{\text{freeze}}(i) = \frac{1}{S \Sigma \langle v_{\text{th}}(i)\rangle_{\text{H}_{\text{II}}}} \times \frac{1}{2 \times 10^4 \text{ yr}} \times \left( \frac{a_{\text{min}}}{10^{-5} \text{ cm}} \right)^{-0.5} \times \left( \frac{a_{\text{max}}}{10^{-5} \text{ cm}} \right)^{-0.5} \times A(i)^{0.5} \times \frac{10 \text{ K}}{T_{\text{gas}}} \times \left( \frac{0.5}{10^5 \text{ cm}^{-3} n_{\text{H}}} \right)$$

(14)

where $S$ is the sticking coefficient (=1, as recently found by Bisschop et al. 2006), $\langle v_{\text{th}}(i)\rangle_{\text{H}_{\text{II}}}$ is the average thermal velocity of species i, $n_{\text{H}}$ is the total number density of H nuclei ($n_{\text{H}} = n(\text{H}) + 2n(\text{H}_2)$), $A(i)$ is the atomic mass number of species i, and

$$\Sigma = (4.88 \times 10^{-25} + 4.66 \times 10^{-25}) \times \left( \frac{a_{\text{min}}^3 - a_{\text{max}}^3}{a_{\text{max}}^3} \right)$$

(15)

is the grain surface area per H nucleon in the MRN distribution (see also Weingartner & Draine 2001). The electron fraction is calculated as in Sect. 5.1.

The binding energies for CO and N$_2$ have been taken from Öberg et al. (2005), assuming that the mantle composition is a mixture of CO and H$_2$O ice ($E_{\text{bind}}(\text{CO})/k_{\text{B}} = 1100$ K and $E_{\text{bind}}(\text{N}_2) = 0.9 E_{\text{bind}}(\text{CO})$). The cosmic-ray ionization rate used here is $\zeta = 1.3 \times 10^{-17} \text{ s}^{-1}$, but we have also changed it to explore the effects on the chemistry (see next subsections). Different density structures have been considered (see below) and the (gas ≈ dust)$^1$ temperature profile is similar to the one found by Young et al. (2004) and parametrized so that:

$$T_{\text{dust}} \sim T_{\text{gas}} = 3 \times [8.7 - \log (n(\text{H}_2))] \text{ K} \text{ .}$$

(16)

The minimum (maximum) allowed temperature is 4 K (14 K). We also consider models with temperature profiles increasing

1 This assumption of similar dust and gas temperatures is only valid if the densities are higher than $10^5$ cm$^{-3}$ (e.g. Goldsmith 2001). However, in the range of temperatures typical of low-mass dense cores, this approximation does not significantly change the results of our model.

inwards, to simulate the heating of the embedded young stellar object. In this case, we assume a central temperature of 50 K at a distance of 80 AU, and a radial dependence $r^{-0.5}$ for $r > 80$ AU. If the temperature drops below the one described in Eq. (16), the latter value is used.

CO and N$_2$ can freeze out (with rates given by $1/t_{\text{freeze}}$, see Eq. (14)) and return to the gas phase via thermal desorption or cosmic-ray impulsive heating (following Hasegawa et al. 1992; Hasegawa & Herbst 1993). The abundance of the molecular ions (N$_2$H$^+$, HCO$^+$, H$_3^+$ and their deuterated isotopologues) are calculated in terms of the instantaneous abundances of neutral species (assumption based on the short time scale of ion chemistry, compared to the depletion time scale; see Caselli et al. 2002b, for details).

5.2.1. N(ortho-H$_2$D$^+$) vs. the observed $R_0$

In Fig. 4, the column density of ortho-H$_2$D$^+$ is plotted as a function of the observed deuteration fractionation ratio ($R_0$). $R_0$ is equivalent to $N(\text{N}_2\text{D}^+)/N(\text{N}_2\text{H}^+)$, in the case of starless cores (plus L 1521F), and this value has been taken from the survey of Crapsi et al. (2005). In star forming regions, the N$_2$D$^+/N_2$H$^+$ column density ratio is not available, and other column density ratios have been used: (i) $N(\text{NH}_2\text{D})/N(\text{NH}_3)$ for NGC 1333–DCO$^+$ (Hatchell 2003) and for B 1 (Roueff et al. 2005); (ii) $\sqrt{N(\text{D}_2\text{CO})/N(\text{H}_2\text{CO})}$ for NGC 2264G VLA2 (Loinard et al. 2002). No deuteration fractionation estimates are available for IRAM 04191. Given that NH$_3$ and N$_2$H$^+$ appear to trace similar zones of dense cores (e.g. Benson et al. 1998; Caselli et al. 2002c), and that both derive from the same parent species (N$_2$), one expects that the D-fractionation observed in the two species is also similar (and linked to the theoretical $R_0$ in Eq. (13)). However, it is not obvious that formaldehyde is actually tracing the same region (indeed H$_2$CO is centrally depleted in the two starless cores studied by Tafalla et al. 2006, unlike N$_2$H$^+$ and N$_2$D$^+$).

Figure 4 shows that the deuteration-fractionation in NGC 2264G is the largest one in the whole sample, probably suggesting that different deuteration mechanisms (beside the H$_3^+$ fractionation) may be at work for H$_2$CO. One possibility is that surface chemistry is needed to explain the observed amount of deuterated formaldehyde and methanol, as originally discussed by Charnley et al. (1997), Ceccarelli et al. (1998), and more recently by Peretto et al. (2006).

In the top panel, each data point is labelled with the corresponding name, whereas the bottom panel shows the same data points with model curves superposed (see below). The first thing to note is that, on average, dense protostellar cores (filled symbols) have lower N(ortho-H$_2$D$^+$) values than starless cores, but on average they show quite large deuteration fractionations (especially in the case of NGC 2264G VLA2, where $R_0$ is from measurements of doubly deuterated formaldehyde, as already mentioned). Another thing to note is that there is not any clear correlation between N(ortho-H$_2$D$^+$) and the observed $R_0$. To investigate this unexpected result, we used the model described in Sect. 5.2 and simulate an evolutionary sequence, similar to what was done in Crapsi et al. (2005) in their Fig. 5.

We consider Bonnor-Ebert (BE) spheres with density structures analogous to the radial (cylindrical) density profile of the contracting disk-like cloud at different stages of evolution in the model of Ciolek & Basu (2000), namely those at times $t = t_1$ ($=2.27$ Myr and central densities $n_{c1}(H_2) = 4 \times 10^4$ cm$^{-3}$), $t_2$ ($=2.60$ Myr, and $n_{c2}(H_2) = 4 \times 10^5$ cm$^{-3}$), $t_3$ ($=2.66$ Myr, and $n_{c3}(H_2) = 4 \times 10^6$ cm$^{-3}$), $t_4$ ($=2.68$ Myr, and $n_{c4}(H_2) = 4 \times 10^7$ cm$^{-3}$), and $t_5$ ($=2.684$ Myr, and $n_{c5}(H_2) = 4 \times 10^8$ cm$^{-3}$).
The BE density profile is reasonably well reproduced by the parametric formula (Tafalla et al. 2002):

$$n(r) = \frac{n_{i}(H_{2})}{(1 + (r/r_0)^{\alpha})}$$  \hspace{0.5cm} (17)

where $r_0 = 13000, 3000, 800, 300,$ and $80$ AU for $t_1, t_2, t_3, t_5,$ and $t_8,$ respectively, and $\alpha = 2.$ The five chemical models (i.e. the CO and N$_2$ depletion chemistry in the five model clouds with different physical structure) have been run for a time interval given by $(t_i - t_1),$ for $i = 2-5,$ whereas the $t_1$ model has been run for $2.27$ Myr. We also consider a model cloud with the same density structure as the $t_5$ model, but with a temperature profile resembling that of a centrally heated protostellar core (model $t_{5a},$ with a central temperature of $50$ K and a temperature gradient proportional to $r^{-0.6}$ (as mentioned above). The abundance profiles of $H_2D^+, N_2H^+$ and $N_2D^+$ calculated by the models have been convolved with $22''$, $26''$, and $17''$ FWHM antenna beams, respectively, to simulate the observations and calculate the column densities toward the core center (as well as off peak).

The results of these models are the small diamonds in each of the curves in the bottom panel of Fig. 4, with $t_1$ lying on the left-end and $t_{5a}$ on the right-end of the curve. Solid curves represent models with standard rate coefficients for the proton-deuteron exchange reactions, whereas dashed curves models use the about 3 times smaller GHR02 rates (see previous sub-section). The different curves correspond to models with different values of the o/p ratio of $H_2D^+$ ($o/p\text{-}H_2D^+$), from 0.03 (bottom curves) to 2.0 (top curves). As discussed by Flower et al. (2004), the o/p ratio is a sensitive function of the o/p $H_2$ ratio and, ultimately, of the gas temperature (see their Fig. 6) and at $T_{\text{gas}} < 15$ K, it changes from $0.03$ to values probably larger than one (this last statement is valid if the curve in Fig. 6 of Flower et al. (2004) is simply extrapolated at temperatures lower than 9 K, the minimum value in the figure$^2$). In all curves, the $t_5$ models show a slight decrease in both the $H_2D^+$ column density and in the deuterium fractionation. In fact, at such high central densities: (i) $H_2D^+$ is efficiently converted into $D_2H^+$ and $D_2^+,$ thus lowering the total $H_2D^+$ column along the line of sight; (ii) $N_2$ significantly freezes onto dust grains, so that the $N_2D^+/N_2H^+$ column density ratio – our measure of the observed $R_D$ – traces regions away from the center, where the density is lower and the temperature is higher. If a protostar is present, the $H_2D^+$ column density increases again because of the less efficient transformation of $H_2^+$ into $D_2^+,$ while $R_D$ decreases (see also Fig. 3) because of the less abundant $D_2^+.$ From the comparison between the data and the model, one is tempted to conclude that indeed variations in the $o/p\text{-}H_2D^+$ ratio (and ultimately in the gas temperature of the central few thousand AU of dense cores) can explain the observed scatter among the cores. It is interesting to note that the two pre-stellar cores with high values of $R_D$ and relatively low ortho-$H_2D^+$ column densities are both embedded in the Ophiuchus Molecular Cloud Complex: Oph D and 16293E. Chemical abundances observed in these two cores are consistent with a lower $H_2D^+$ o/p ratio, suggesting possible (slightly) larger kinetic temperatures.

Figure 5 shows two other attempts to interpret the data. The top panel considers exactly the same models as in Fig. 4 but now the o/p-$H_2D^+$ ratio is fixed at 0.5 (consistent with dense gas at 9 K; see Flower et al. 2004), whereas the free parameter is the cosmic-ray ionization rate $\zeta,$ which is varied from $6 \times 10^{-18}$ s$^{-1}$ (bottom dashed and solid curves) and $3 \times 10^{-17}$ s$^{-1}$ (top curves). We note that variations in the cosmic-ray ionization rate are known to exist in the Galaxy (van der Tak et al. 2006). The four pre-stellar cores with the largest $N(\text{ortho-}H_2D^+)$ values (L 492, L 1544, L 694–2, and L 183) can all be reproduced by $t_5/t_1$ ($t_5/t_6$) models with the GHR02 (standard) rates and $\zeta = 1 \times 10^{-17}$ s$^{-1}$ (with L 429 (L 183) being the most (least) dynamically evolved). Significantly lower values of $\zeta (< 6 \times 10^{-18}$ s$^{-1}$) appear to be required in the protostellar and Ophiuchus cores. However, an alternative way to reproduce these data, without requiring extremely low $\zeta$ values, is to lower the o/p-$H_2D^+$ ratio, as found before (the thick dashed curves represent models with

$^2$ At a density of $2 \times 10^6$ cm$^{-3},$ temperature $T_{\text{gas}} = 8$ K, grain size 0.1 $\mu m,$ the o/p-$H_2D^+$ is about 1.2 (Pineau des Forêts, priv. comm.)
o/p-$H_2D^+$ = 0.3 and $\zeta = 6 \times 10^{-18}$ s$^{-1}$. In B 68, only the low o/p-$H_2D^+$ model curve (at early evolutionary times) can reproduce the low ortho-$H_2D^+$ column densities and deuterium fractionations, the lowest in the sample.

In the bottom panel of Fig. 5, we consider five clouds with structure as in the $t_i$ ($i = 1, ..., 5$) models (see Eq. (17)) and for each of them we follow the chemical evolution, checking the results after 10$^3$, 10$^4$, 10$^5$, and 10$^6$ yr. This allows us to explore how different chemical ages can change the gas composition and avoid the problem of fixing the (unknown) chemical evolution time as in the bottom panel of Fig. 4. As for the top panel, the o/p-$H_2D^+$ ratio has been fixed at 0.5, except for the thick curves representing the $t_5$ protostellar cloud models, where o/p = 0.1, assuming that the gas has been (slightly) heated compared to the pre-stellar cores. The cosmic-ray ionization rate is fixed at 1.3 $\times 10^{-17}$ s$^{-1}$. The four ortho-$H_2D^+$ – rich pre-stellar cores can be reproduced by $t_5$ models, with (chemical) ages between 10$^4$ and 10$^6$ yr, when GHR02 rate coefficients are used. On the other hand, the protostellar cores and the two Ophiuchus cores are better matched by the more dynamically evolved (centrally concentrated) $t_5$ and $t_5$ models, respectively, after about 10$^3$–10$^4$ years of (chemical) evolution.

5.2.2. $N$(ortho-$H_2D^+$) vs. the observed $f_0$

From the models described in the previous subsection, one can directly derive the abundance of CO within each cloud model as a function of cloud radius and, as before, $N$(CO) is obtained, after integrating the CO number density along the line of sight and smoothing the results with a 22″ beam width (to simulate observations carried out at the IRAM 30 m antenna, where most of the cores have been observed). From the model column density, the CO depletion factor, $f_0$(CO) is easily calculated using the expression:

$$f_0$(CO) = \frac{x_{can}$(CO)/(N$(CO)/N$(H_2)) \tag{18}$$

where $x_{can}$(CO) is the “canonical” or “undepleted” abundance of CO, assumed here equal to 9.5 $\times 10^{-5}$, following Frerking et al. 1982, but known to be uncertain by a factor of about 2; see e.g. Lacy et al. 1994).

To compare our model predictions with the data, we collect from the literature the values of observed $f_0$(CO) and plotted them versus $N$(ortho-$H_2D^+$) in Fig. 6. The majority of the $f_0$(CO) data comes from Crapsi et al. (2005), except for: (i) TMC-1C ($f_0$(CO) = 6.9, from Schnee et al. 2007a); (ii) L 183 ($f_0$(CO) = 5, from Pagani et al. 2003); (iii) NGC 1333–DCO$^+$ ($f_0$(CO) = 12, from Jørgensen et al. 2002); (iv) B 1 ($f_0$(CO) = 3.2, from Lis et al. 2002b); (v) IRAM 04191 (f0$_{CO}$ = 3.5 from Belloche & André 2004); (vi) OriB 9 ($f_0$(CO) = 3.6, from Harju et al. 2006, for N$(H_2)$; and Caselli & Myers 1995, for N$(CO)$). Also, for L 1544, L 429, L 694-2 and Oph D, the new values of N$(H_2)$, adopted to take into account the temperature structure (see Table 3), imply different values of $f_0$ (larger by a factor of about 1.4, the ratio between the new and old N$(H_2)$ values, as explained in Sect. 4.1) from those reported by Crapsi et al. (2005). The data and model results are shown in Fig. 6. In general, the presence of embedded young stellar objects appears to lower the $H_2D^+$ column density, without much affecting the amount of CO freeze-out, which is probably still large in the high density and cold protostellar envelopes. The possible (small) temperature increase caused by the central heating is thus not sufficient to significantly release CO back into the gas phase, but it can affect the o/p-$H_2D^+$ ratio (and, consequently, the ortho-$H_2D^+$ column density), as discussed in the previous sub-section.

In the top panel of Fig. 6, the data are compared with the same models described in Fig. 5 (left panel; $t_i$, $i = 1, 2, ..., 5$), where the cosmic-ray ionization rate is varied from $6 \times 10^{-18}$ s$^{-1}$ to $3 \times 10^{-17}$ s$^{-1}$. The o/p-$H_2D^+$ ratio has been fixed at 0.5, except for the thick dashed curve, where o/p = 0.1, a value probably more appropriate for protostellar cores (see previous sections). Now, $t_2$–$t_5$ models (depending on the rate coefficient values adopted for the proton-deuteron exchange reactions), with $\zeta \simeq 10^{-17}$ s$^{-1}$, can explain the observations toward the ortho-$H_2D^+$ – rich pre-stellar cores, with the exception of L 183, where the low $f_0$(CO) value suggests a younger dynamical phase, consistent with what is found in the previous sub-section (we also note that L 183 and TMC-1C appear to have similar ages, but with different cosmic ray ionization rates and/or o/p-$H_2D^+$ ratios, see...
bottom panel of Fig. 6). Lower o/p-H$_2$D$^+$ ratios are needed to reproduce the protostellar and Ophiuchus cores, as found for the N(ortho-H$_2$D$^+$) vs. $R_\odot$ relation.

The bottom panel of Fig. 6 shows the same set of data and models, but now $\zeta$ has been fixed at $1.3 \times 10^{-17}$ s$^{-1}$, whereas the o/p-H$_2$D$^+$ ratio has been changed as in Fig. 4. As already noted, L 1544, L 429, L 694-2, and L 183 data are best reproduced by large values of the o/p-H$_2$D$^+$ ratio, and the appropriate physical structure is that of $t_1$-$t_5$ models, similarly to the top panel (with L 183 being the least evolved). This implies cores slightly more evolved than what is found in Figs. 4 (bottom panel) and 5 (top panel), where (standard rate) models between $t_1$ and $t_2$ were preferred. The small discrepancy can be understood if the predicted CO depletion factor is too large compared to observations. Reasons for this could be: (i) we are missing an important desorption mechanism (besides the cosmic-ray impulsive heating and the thermal desorption, the latter not being efficient at the temperatures of these objects); (ii) unlike our spherical and isolated model cores, real cloud cores are embedded in molecular clouds where CO is quite abundant. Thus, the observed “extra” gaseous CO may be part of the undepleted material accreting onto the core from the surrounding molecular cloud (see also Schnee et al. 2007a, for a similar conclusion in the particular case of TMC-1C).

6. Conclusions

Low-mass dense cloud cores have been observed with the CSO antenna at the frequency of the ortho-H$_2$D$^+$($1_{1,0}$-$1_{1,1}$) line. The main conclusions of this work are:

1) In starless cores, the line has been detected in 7 (out of 10) objects. The brightest lines ($T_{\text{mb}} = 0.7-0.9$ K) are observed toward the densest and more dynamically evolved starless cores (L 1544, L 183, Oph D, L 429, and L 694-2), where the deuterium fractionations and the CO depletion factors are largest. Non-detections are found in cores less centrally concentrated and dense than the rest of the sample (L 1498, TMC-2, and B 68). In B 68, recent APEX observations have detected a faint ortho-H$_2$D$^+$ line with intensities consistent with our upper limit.

2) Significant differences in line widths are also observed among starless cores, with the narrowest lines ($\Delta v \approx 0.4$ km s$^{-1}$) found in TMC-1C, L 1517B, Oph D, and L 183, whereas L 1544, L 429, and L 694-2 show $\Delta v = 0.5-0.7$ km s$^{-1}$.

3) The ortho-H$_2$D$^+$($1_{1,0}$-$1_{1,1}$) line has been detected in 4 out of 6 protostellar cores, where we find $T_{\text{mb}} \leq 0.5$ K (the largest value observed is toward L 1521F, which hosts a very low luminosity object recently detected by Spitzer). The broadest lines are observed toward the two cores in Perseus NGC 1333–DCO$^+$ and B 1, where $\Delta v \approx 1$ km s$^{-1}$. The ortho-H$_2$D$^+$($1_{1,0}$-$1_{1,1}$) lines have broader non-thermal widths than N$_2$D$^+$($2-1$) lines, even in L 1544, where the two transitions have similar extension and morphology.

4) The ortho-H$_2$D$^+$ column densities range between 2 and $40 \times 10^{12}$ cm$^{-2}$ in starless cores and between 2 and $9 \times 10^{12}$ cm$^{-2}$ in protostellar cores. Thus, protostars in the earliest stages of their evolution appear to have already changed the chemical structure of their envelopes by lowering the ortho-H$_2$D$^+$ fractional abundance but not their deuterium fractionation. This is probably due to (a few degrees) variation of the gas temperature, which strongly affects the o/p-H$_2$D$^+$ ratio. A similar effect is also found in the two Ophiuchus cores, suggesting a (slightly) higher gas temperature than in the other (mainly Taurus and Perseus) cores.

5) Simple models suggest that variations in the gas kinetic temperature, CO depletion factor, grain size distribution, cosmic-ray ionization rate and volume densities can largely affect the H$_2$D$^+$ abundances relative to H$_2^+$. In particular, gas temperatures above 15 K, low CO depletion factors and large abundance of negatively charged small dust grains or PAHs drastically reduce the deuterium fractionation to values inconsistent with those observed toward pre-stellar and protostellar cores.

6) Plots of the ortho-H$_2$D$^+$ column density vs. (i) the deuterium fractionation observed in species such as N$_2$H$^+$ and NH$_3$; and (ii) the observed CO depletion factor, show a large scatter. The data can be reproduced by chemical models of centrally concentrated cores assuming variations in the o/p ratio of H$_2$D$^+$ (ultimately linked to kinetic temperature variations). Changes in the cosmic-ray ionization rate between 6 and $3 \times 10^{-18}$ s$^{-1}$ can also explain part of the scatter, but not those objects with large deuterium fractionations and low ortho-H$_2$D$^+$ column densities (such as the Ophiuchus pre-stellar cores and the protostellar ones), for which a decrease of the o/p-H$_2$D$^+$ ratio is required. The most deuterated and H$_2$D$^+$-rich objects are better reproduced by chemical models of centrally concentrated cores with $n_c \approx 10^4$ cm$^{-3}$ and chemical ages between $10^4$ and $10^6$ yr. Protostellar cores, plus the two Ophiuchus cores, are better matched by lower o/p-H$_2$D$^+$ ratios, more dynamically evolved (central densities $\geq 10^9$ cm$^{-3}$) and chemical ages of $10^3$-$10^4$ years. To better constrain dynamical and chemical ages, the rate coefficient for the proton-deuteron exchange reaction needs to be well defined.

7) The para-H$_2$O$^+$(1$_1^-$2$_1^+$) upper limits are consistent with radiative transfer calculations if the fractional abundance of H$_2$O$^+$ is $\leq 10^{-8}$. The para-D$_2$H$^+$($1_{1,0}$-$1_{1,1}$) upper limits provide an upper limit of the para-D$_2$H$^+$ to ortho-H$_2$D$^+$ column density ratio ($N(\text{para})/N(\text{ortho})$). We find $p/o < 1$ in all the sources (except for L 183 and NGC 1333–DCO$^+$, where $p/o < 3$), consistent with chemical model predictions of high density ($2 \times 10^9$ cm$^{-3}$) and low temperature ($T_{\text{kin}} < 10$ K) clouds (Flower et al. 2004). More accurate determinations of temperature and density profiles, as well as observations of the para-H$_2$D$^+$($1_{1,0}$-$1_{1,0}$) line at 1.37 THz, are sorely needed to place more stringent constraints on gas-grain chemical processes in dense cloud cores.

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Appendix A: The search of para-H$_2$O$^+$

The H$_2$O$^+$ line was observed to investigate the chemistry of oxygen in dense cores and, with the help of chemical models, to place some constraints on the oxygen abundance, which, analogously to CO, significantly affects the deuterium fractionation.

We searched for para-H$_2$O$^+$(1$_1^-$2$_1^+$) in seven dense cores but only upper limits were measured. Table A.1 lists the results of this search, including the rms noise and the corresponding upper limits of the column density, which have been calculated in two different ways: (i) using the volume density and kinetic temperature values listed in Table 3 ($N_i$, Col. 6); and (ii) assuming
Table A.1. p-H$_2$O$^+$ column density upper limits.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source name</th>
<th>$T_{	ext{ms}}$ (K)</th>
<th>$T_R$ (K)</th>
<th>$\Delta v^{(0)}$ (km s$^{-1}$)</th>
<th>$n_b$</th>
<th>$N_b^{(a)}$ (cm$^{-2}$)</th>
<th>$T_{bol}$ (K)</th>
<th>$T_{bol}^{(a)}$ (K)</th>
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<td>0.65</td>
<td>&lt;3.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>L 1521F</td>
<td>0.042</td>
<td>&lt;0.13</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>&lt;0.90</td>
<td>0.085</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 1544</td>
<td>0.025</td>
<td>&lt;0.08</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>&lt;0.55</td>
<td>0.063</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 163</td>
<td>0.031</td>
<td>&lt;0.09</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>&lt;0.53</td>
<td>0.050</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oph D</td>
<td>0.083</td>
<td>&lt;0.25</td>
<td>0.24</td>
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<td>0.070</td>
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<tr>
<td>L 429</td>
<td>0.043</td>
<td>&lt;0.13</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0.046</td>
<td>&lt;0.14</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>&lt;0.90</td>
<td>0.080</td>
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</tr>
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</table>

$^{a}$ Assumed value, derived from previous N$_2$H$^+$ (1–0) observations (see text); $^{b}$ column density value obtained using $n(H_2)$ and $T_{bol}$ from Table 3; $^{c}$ column density value assuming $n(H_2) = 10^5$ cm$^{-3}$ and $T_{bol} = 10$ K.

References


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