

# X-ray

production, spectral characteristics, and  
interactions with matter

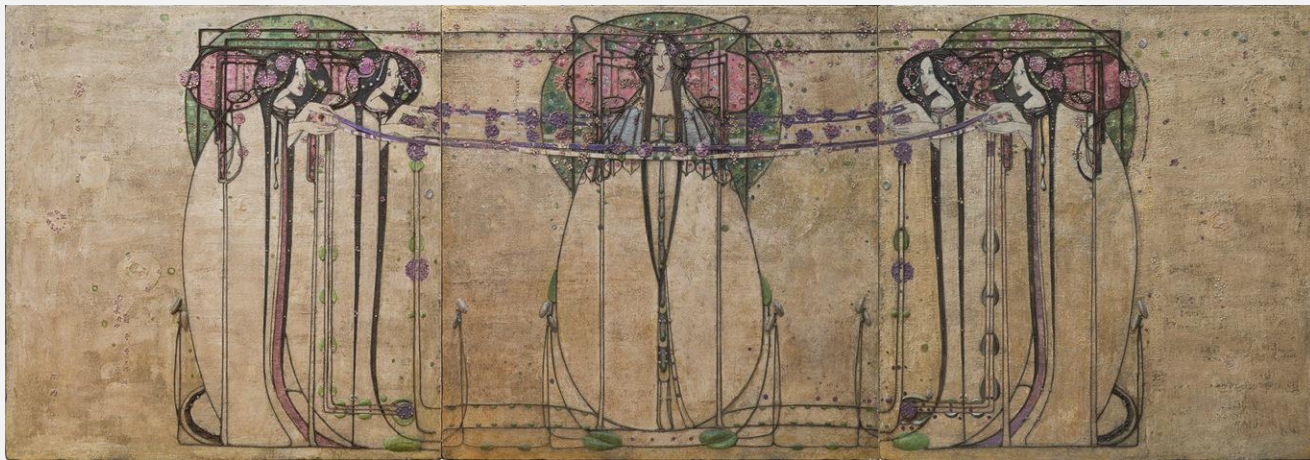
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# *Röntgen and the “golden years” in physics*

- 1895: Röntgen discovered the unknown “X” radiation  
(Alfred Nobel’s will, cinématographe, automobile)
- 1896: Becquerel discovered radioactivity
- 1897: Thomson discovered the electron
- 1898: Pierre and Marie Curie discovered polonium and radium
- 1900: Max Planck derives the law for thermal radiation



*Margaret and Frances MacDonald – Art Nouveau*



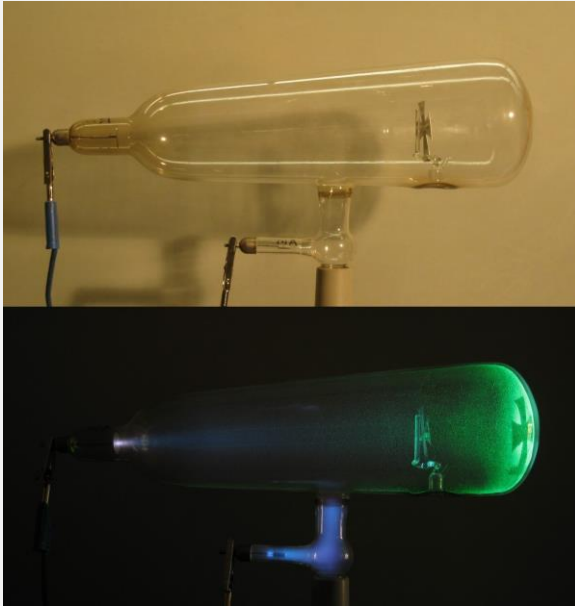
Discovery – early November 1895  
Publishing – 28th december 1895  
(> thousand publication in 1896)  
First medical usage – January 1896  
- Edison's fluoroscope is ready  
for mass production in May 1896

## Wilhelm Conrad Röntgen

1901: Nobel prize in physics for  
the discovery of X ray



22th december 1895 – an  
image of the hand of  
Röntgen's wife



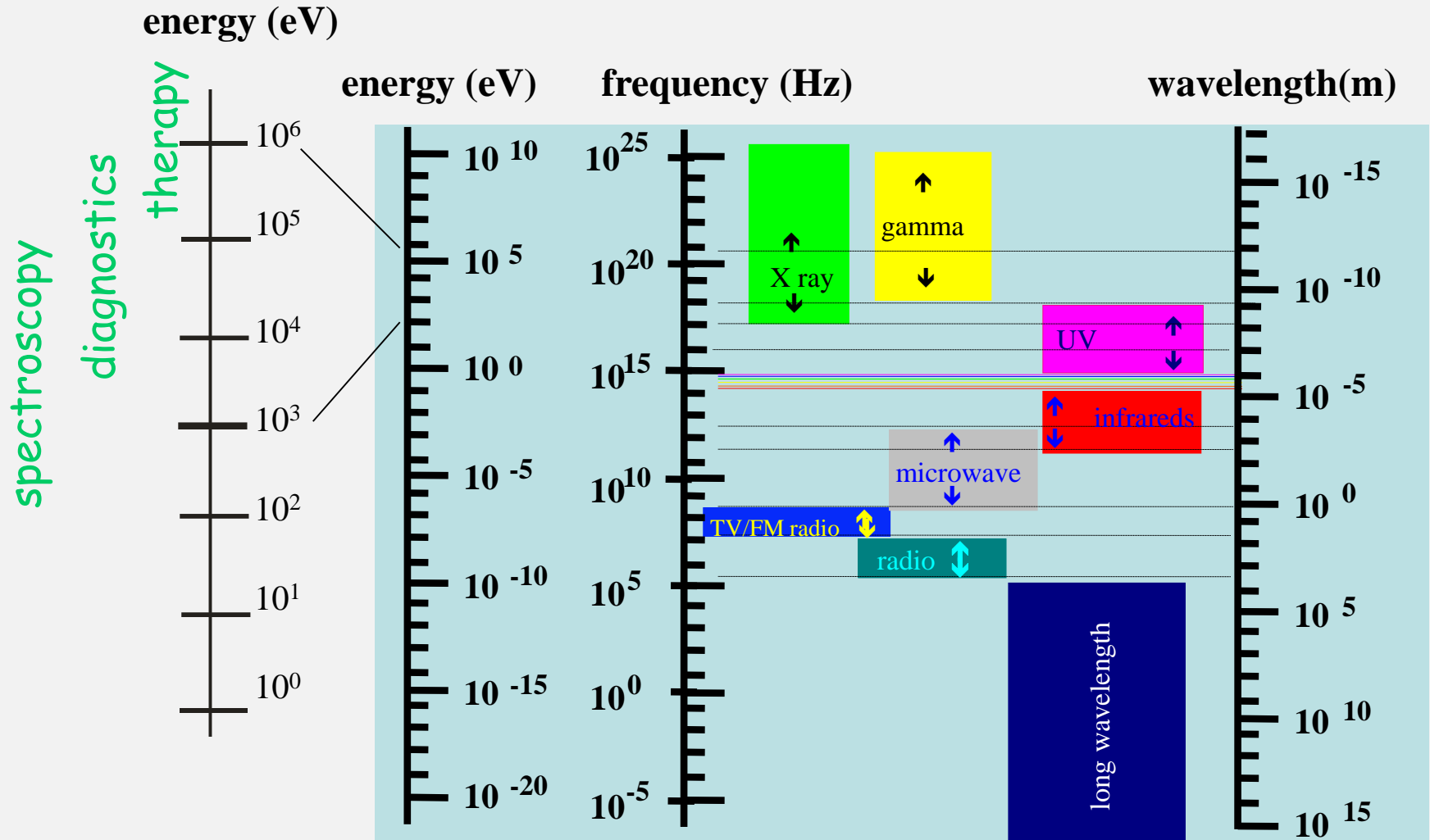
## *the discovery*

William Crookes' tube: electrical discharge tube with partial vacuum  
- cathode rays - fluorescence

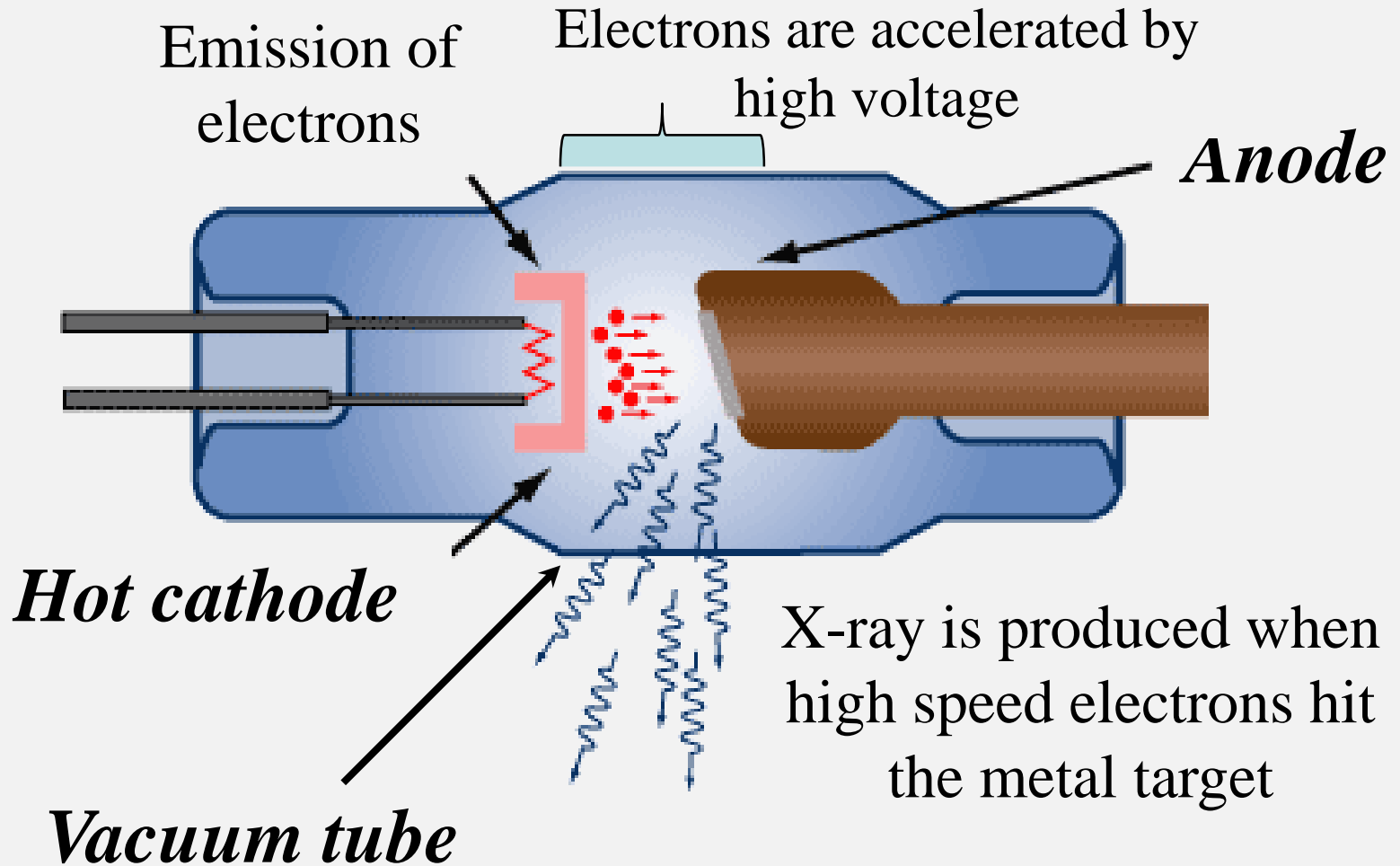
A barium platinocyanide screen fluoresces in the vicinity of Crookes tube.

- Röntgen was investigating cathode rays from a Crookes tube which he had wrapped in black cardboard so that the visible light from the tube would not interfere, using a fluorescent screen painted with barium platinocyanide. He noticed a faint green glow from the screen, about 1 meter away. Röntgen realized some invisible rays coming from the tube were passing through the cardboard to make the screen glow. He found they could also pass through books and papers on his desk. Röntgen threw himself into investigating these unknown rays systematically. Two months after his initial discovery, on 28th December 1895 submitted it's paper to Würzburg's Physical-Medical Society journal.

# *X ray as an electromagnetic ray*

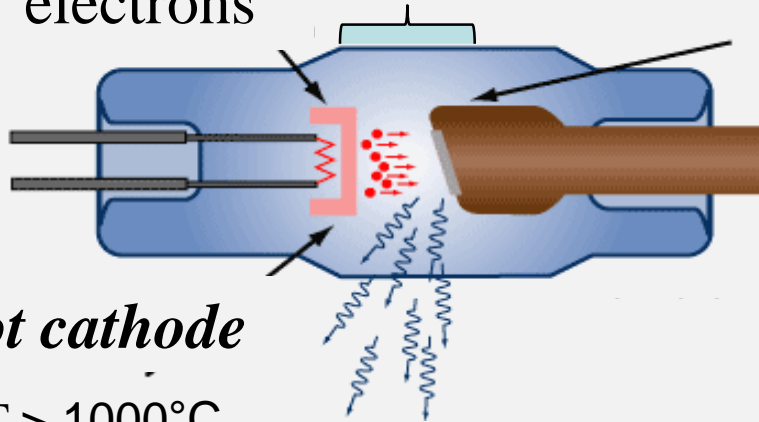


# *Structure of an X ray tube*



# Operation of an X ray tube

Emission of  
electrons

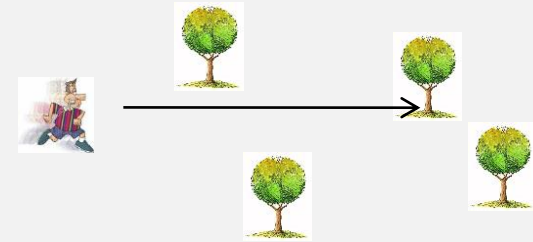


**Hot cathode**

$T > 1000^{\circ}\text{C}$

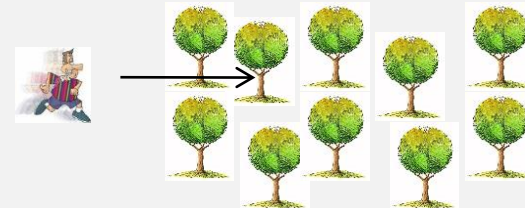
$$I_{anod} = \frac{Q}{t} = \frac{n * e}{t}$$

$$P_{electric} = UI$$



vacuum  $\sim 10^{-4}$  Pa

free pass length  $\sim 10$  cm

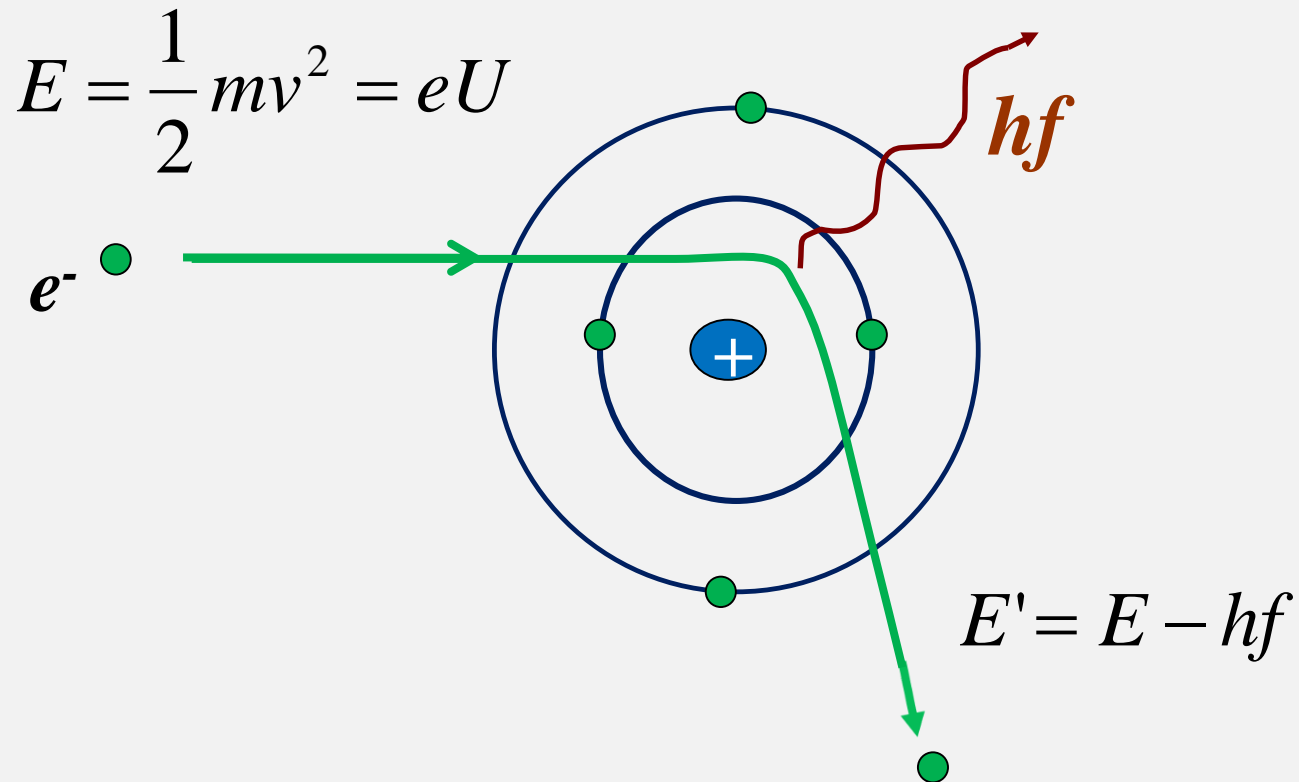


In the air, under atmospheric  
pressure

free pass length  $\sim 70$  nm

# Mechanisms of X-ray production

## 1. Bremsstrahlung or "braking radiation"





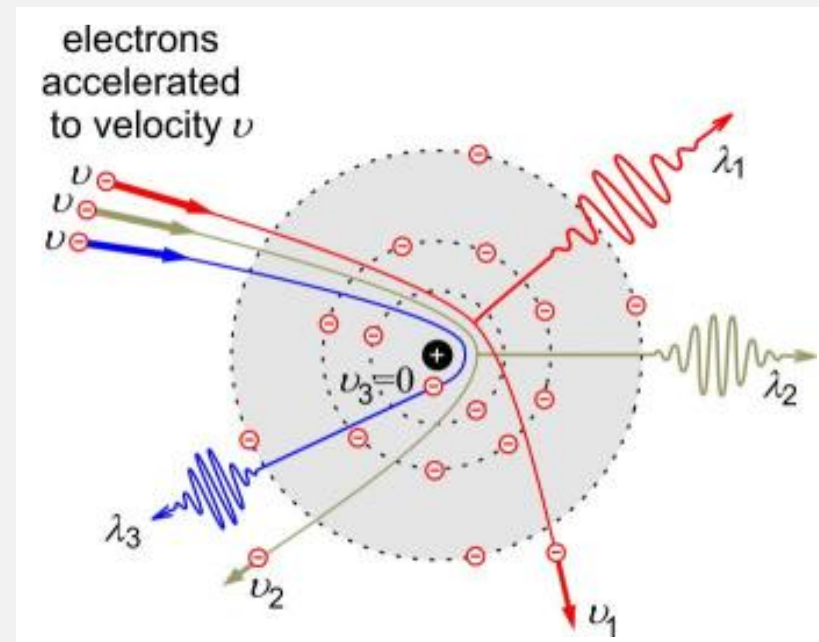
The electron is deflected from its original path and decelerated.

The electron's kinetic energy is reduced.

The energy lost by the electron takes the form of  
a Bremsstrahlung photon.

The photon's energy depends on

- the kinetic energy of incoming electron
- distance of closest approach to the nucleus
- atomic number of target material



Highest photon energy is equal to the kinetic energy of incoming electron.

# *Spectrum of Bremsstrahlung*

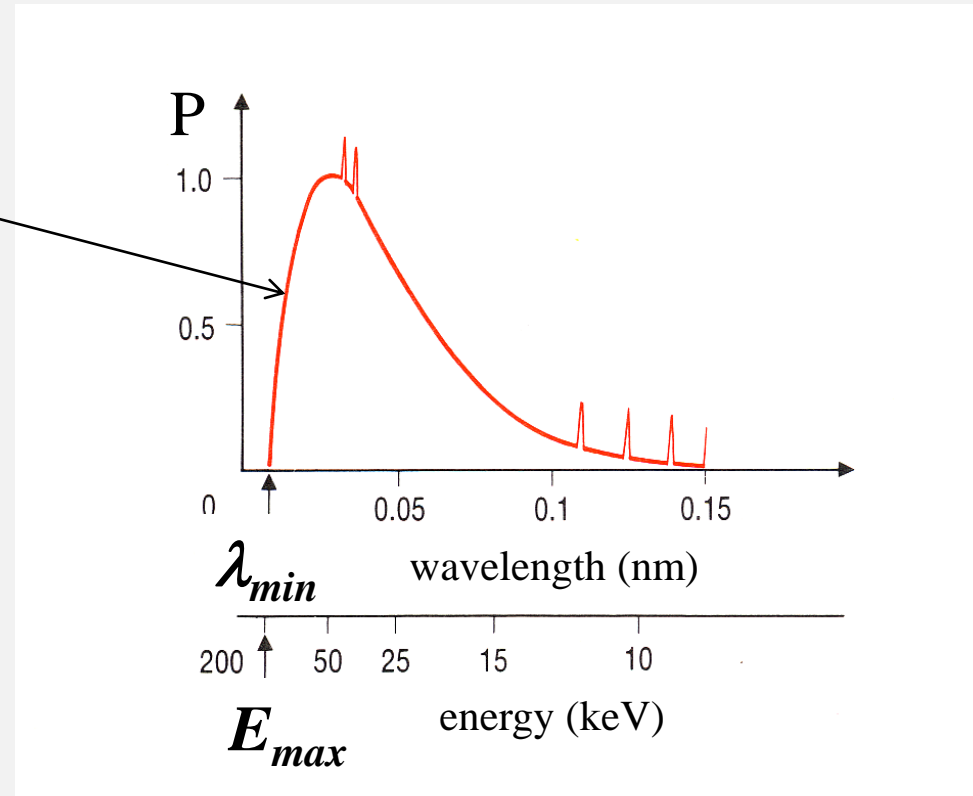
*continuous*  
spectrum

$$E_{\max} = \frac{1}{2}mv^2 = eU$$

$$eU = h \frac{c}{\lambda_{\min}}$$

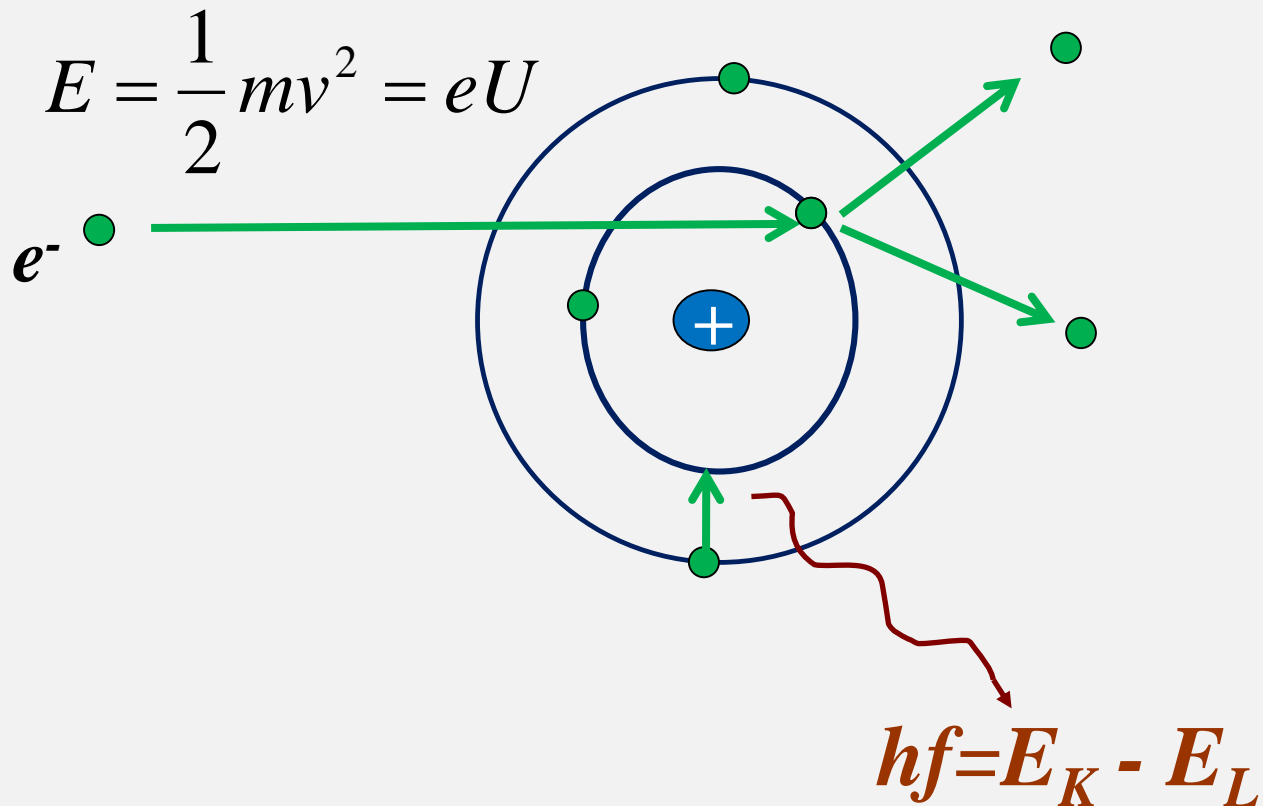
$$\lambda_{\min} = \frac{hc}{eU}$$

*Duane-Hunt law*



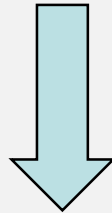
# Mechanisms of X-ray production

## 2. Characteristic radiation



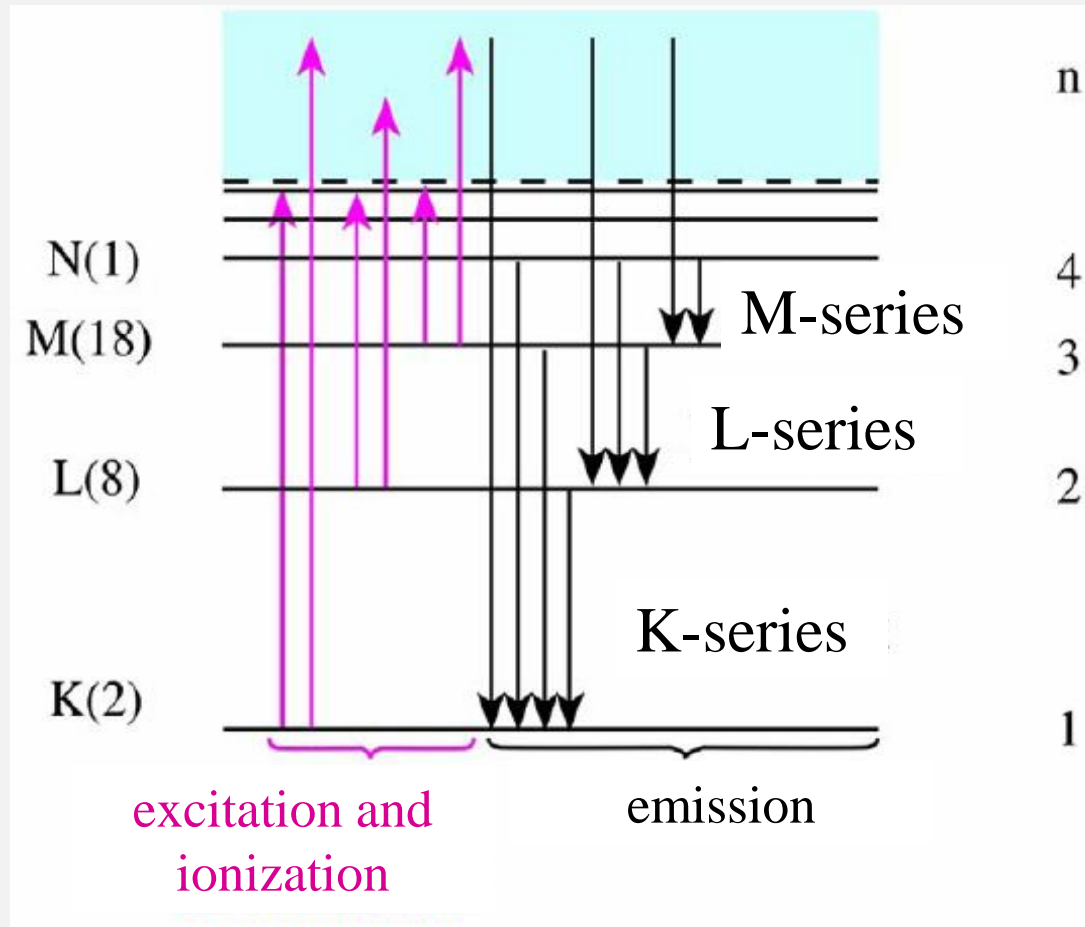
If the incident electron energy is high enough, it may interact with an inner shell electron, ejecting it from its position (excitation/ionization).

The vacancy is occupied by an electron from a higher shell.



The discrete excess energy is emitted as a characteristic photon.

# Possible energy transitions of the Cu-atom with 29 electrons



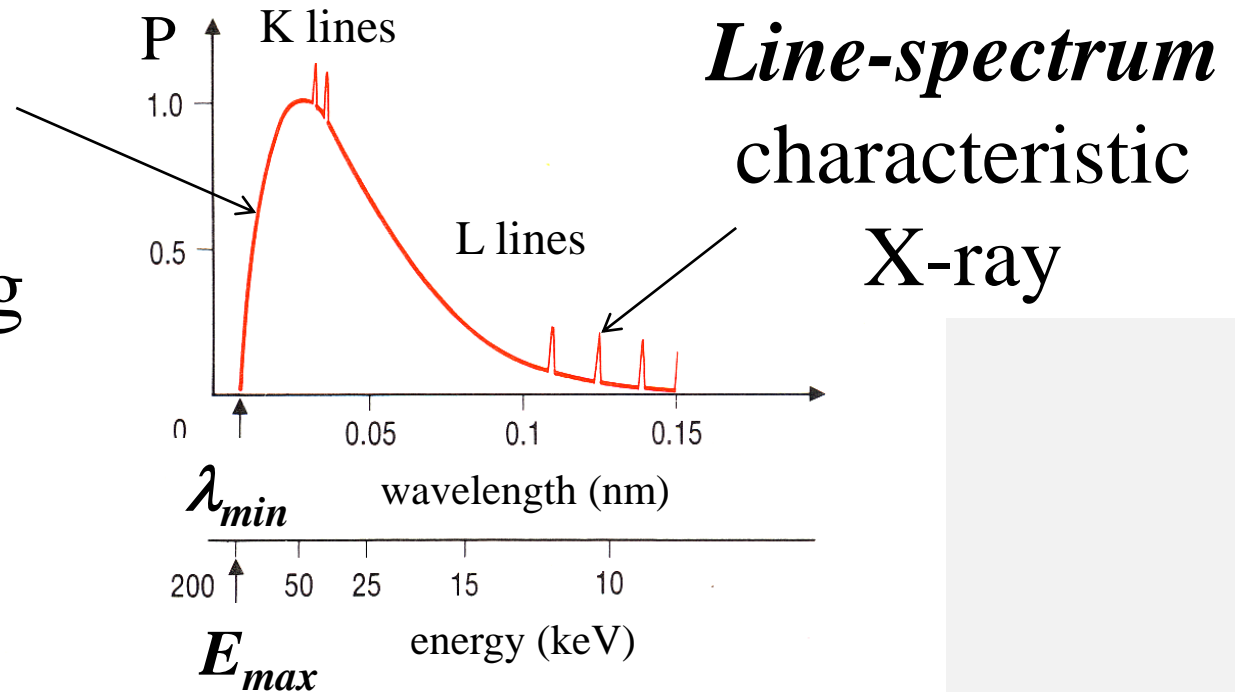
Possible photon energies depend on the electron shell structure of the atom.

# Spectral properties of X-ray

**Continuous**  
spectrum of  
bremsstrahlung

$$\lambda_{\min} = \frac{hc}{eU}$$

**Duane-Hunt law**



# Power and efficiency of X-ray tube

$$P = cIU^2Z$$

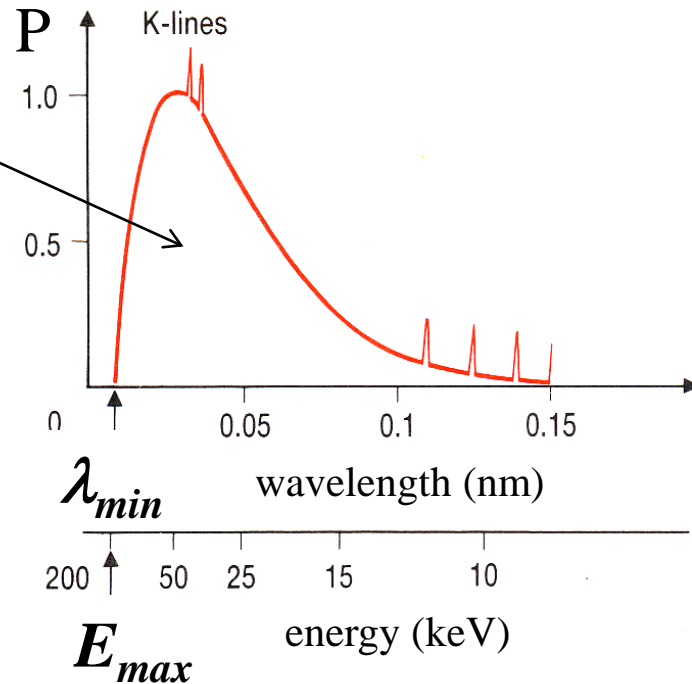
$$c = 1,1 \times 10^{-9} [1/V]$$

input electric power:

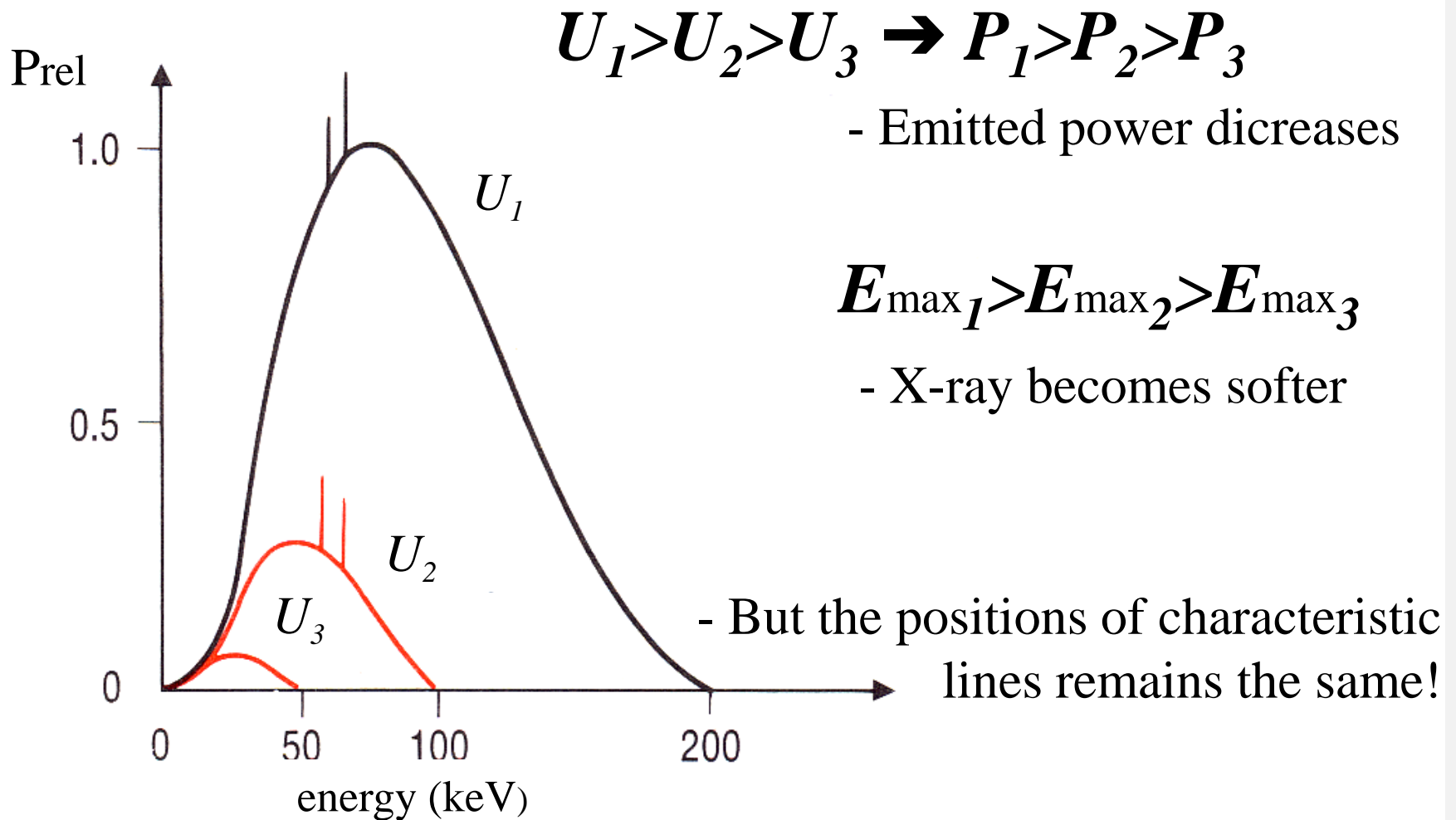
$$P' = IU$$

$$\eta = \frac{P}{P'} = cUZ$$

$$\eta < 1\%$$

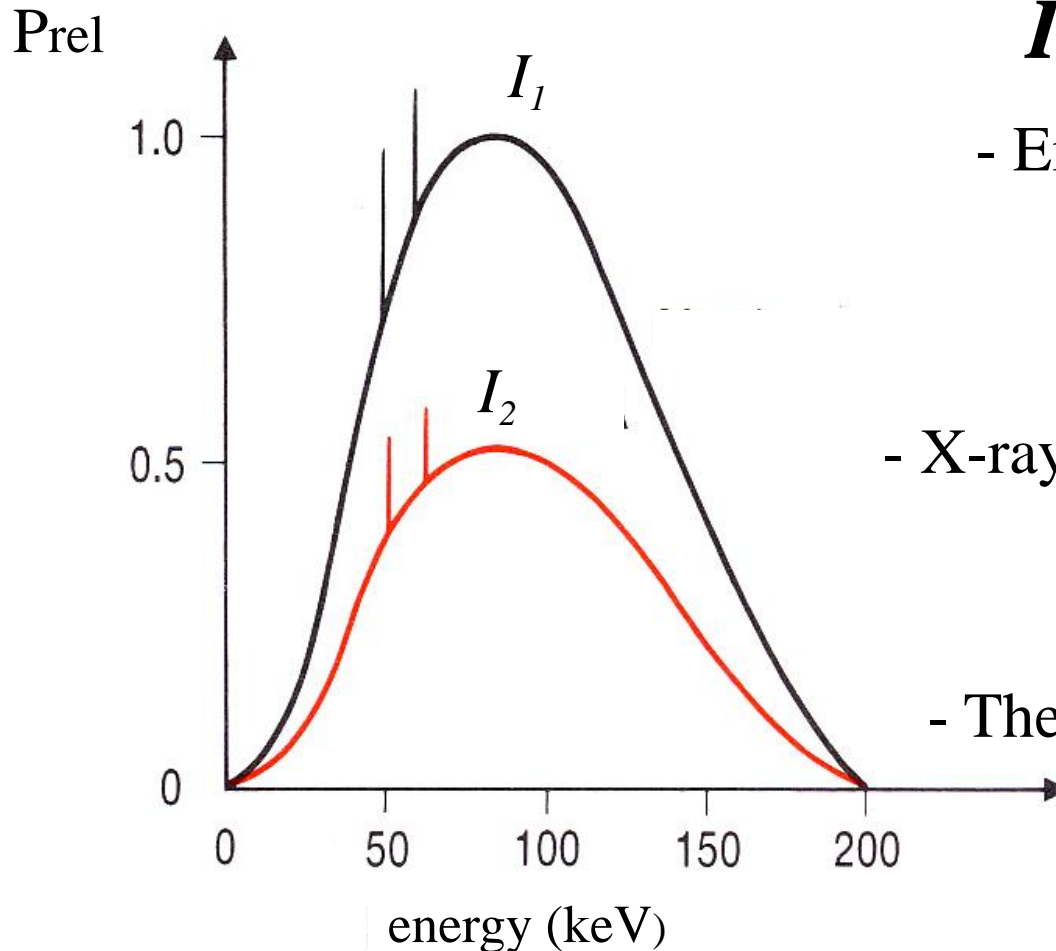


# Change of accelerating voltage





# Change of anode current



$$I_1 > I_2 \rightarrow P_1 > P_2$$

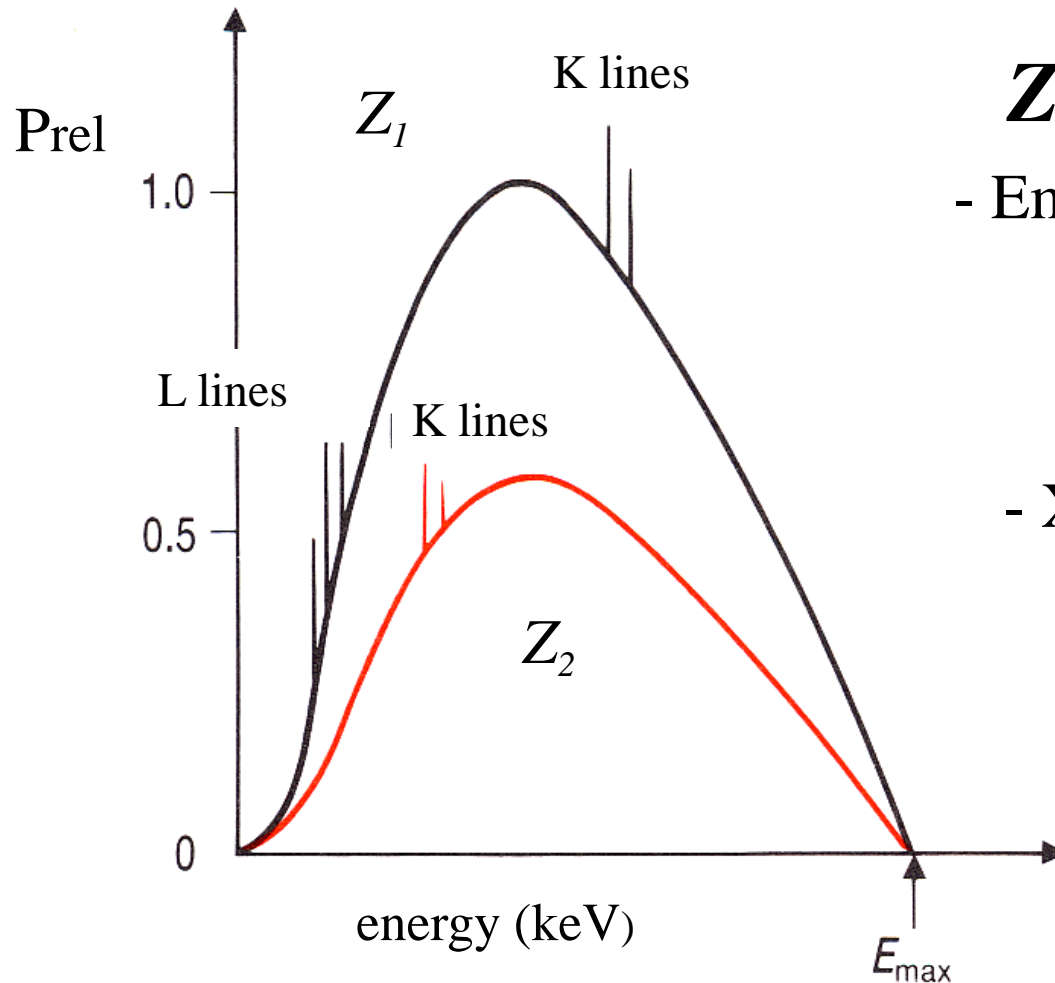
- Emitted power decreases

$$E_{\max 1} = E_{\max 2}$$

- X-ray energy remains the same.

- The positions of characteristic lines remains the same.

# Effect of target (anode) material



$$Z_1 > Z_2 \rightarrow P_1 > P_2$$

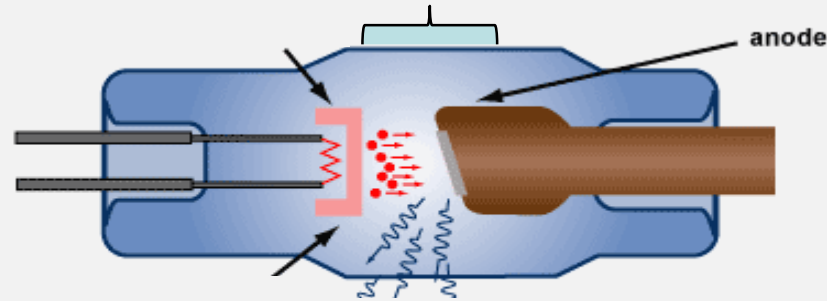
- Emitted power decreases

$$E_{max1} = E_{max2}$$

- X-ray energy remains the same.

- Positions of characteristic lines change!

# X-ray tube in medical settings



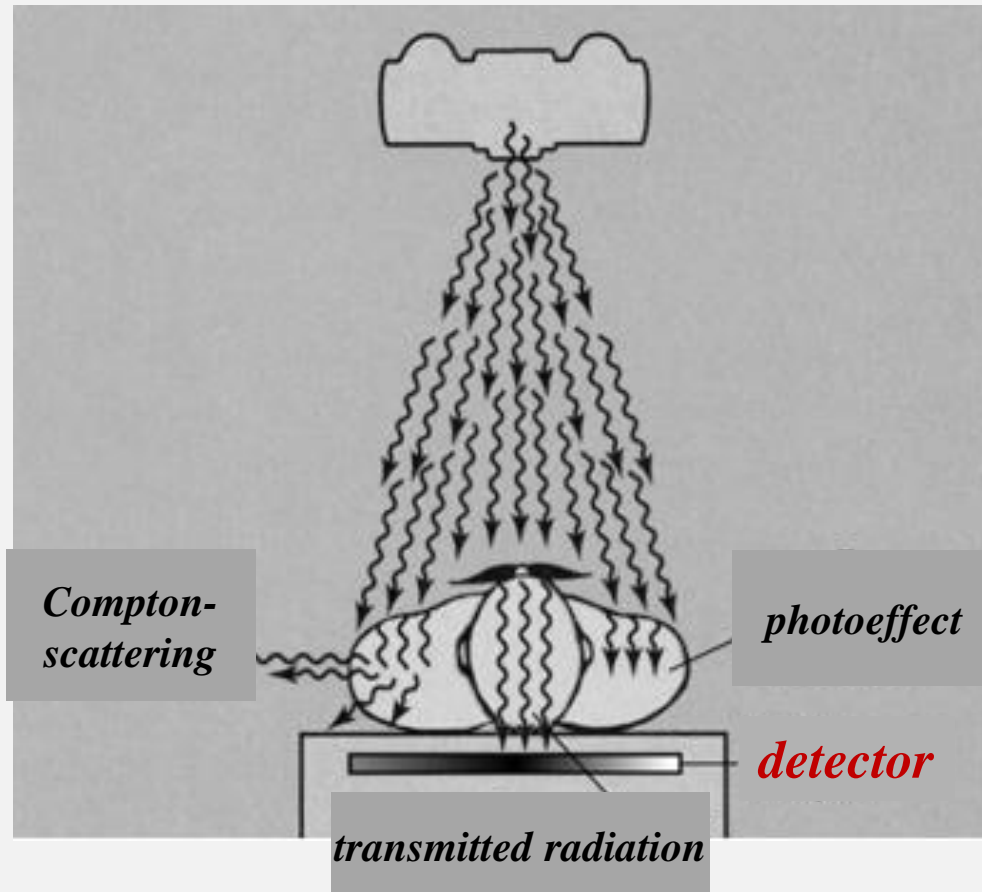
Anode: higher atomic numbers and higher melting points needed.

Focal spot on anode: small=sharper image, big=improved heat distribution but blurred image

Anode position: fixed = reduced thermal load,  $\sim \text{W/mm}^2$  (dentistry)  
rotating = improved thermal load up to  $10000 \text{ W/mm}^2$

Typical accelerating voltage: 25-200 kV, anode current: 1-1000 mA,  
anode material: W (Mo in mammography)

# X-ray diagnostics based on absorption



## *Photon interactions with matter:*

photoeffect

Compton scattering

pair production

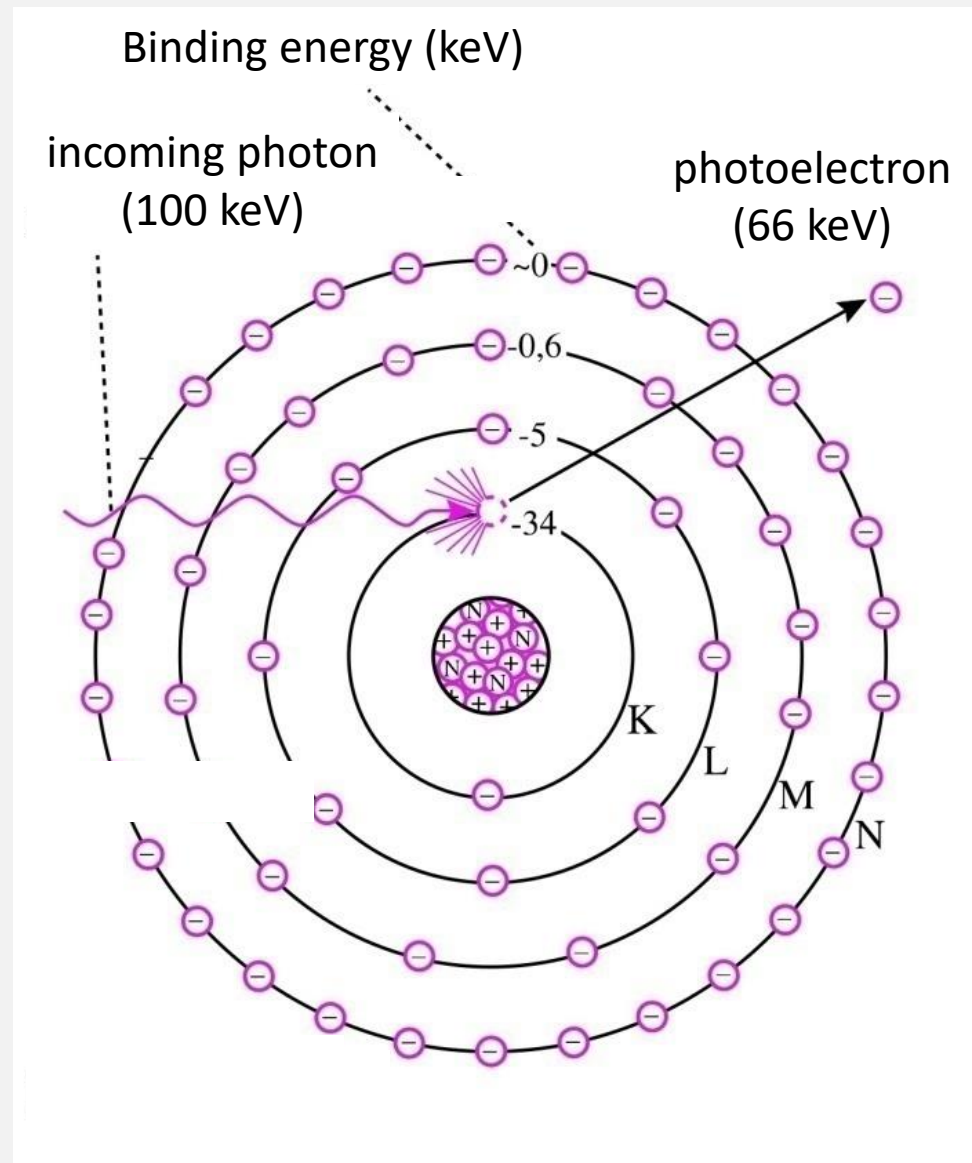
elastic scattering  
(no interaction)

# Mechanism of interaction (1)

## Photoeffect

energy balance:

$$hf = E_{\text{binding}} + \frac{1}{2} m_e v^2$$

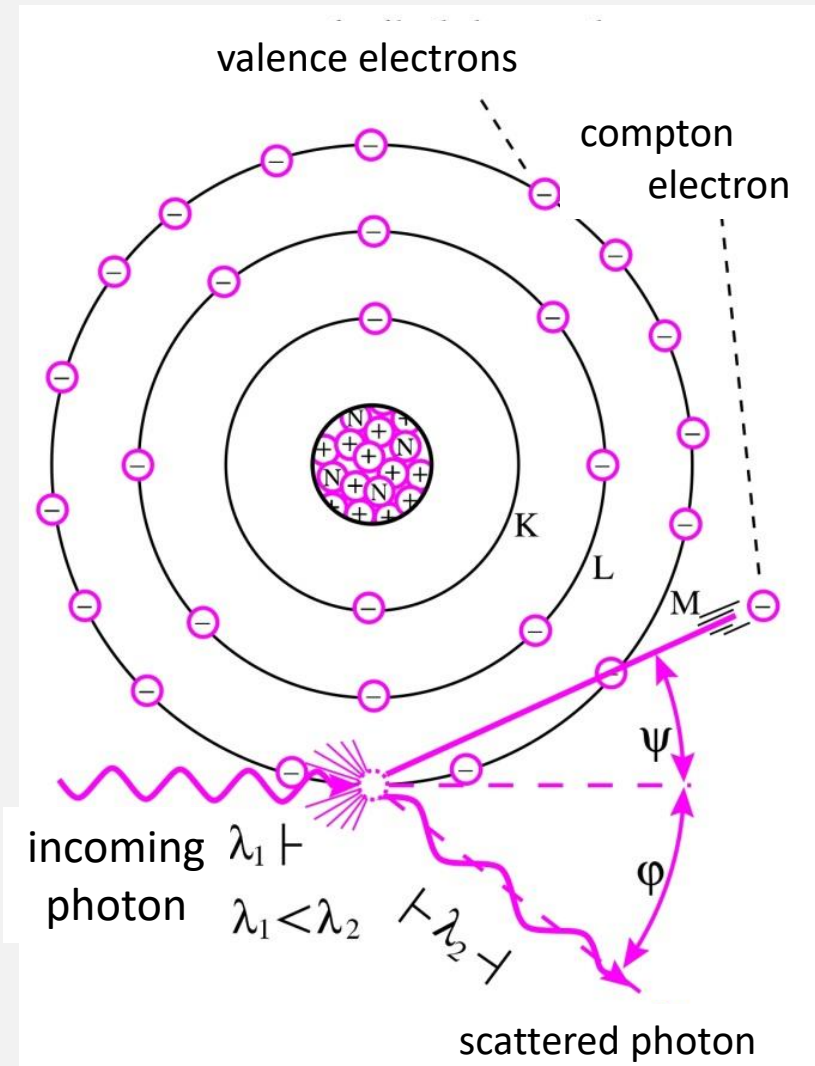


# Mechanism of interaction (2)

## Compton scattering

energy balance:

$$hf = E_{\text{binding}} + \frac{1}{2} m_e v^2 + hf'_{\text{scattered}}$$



# Mechanism of interaction (3)

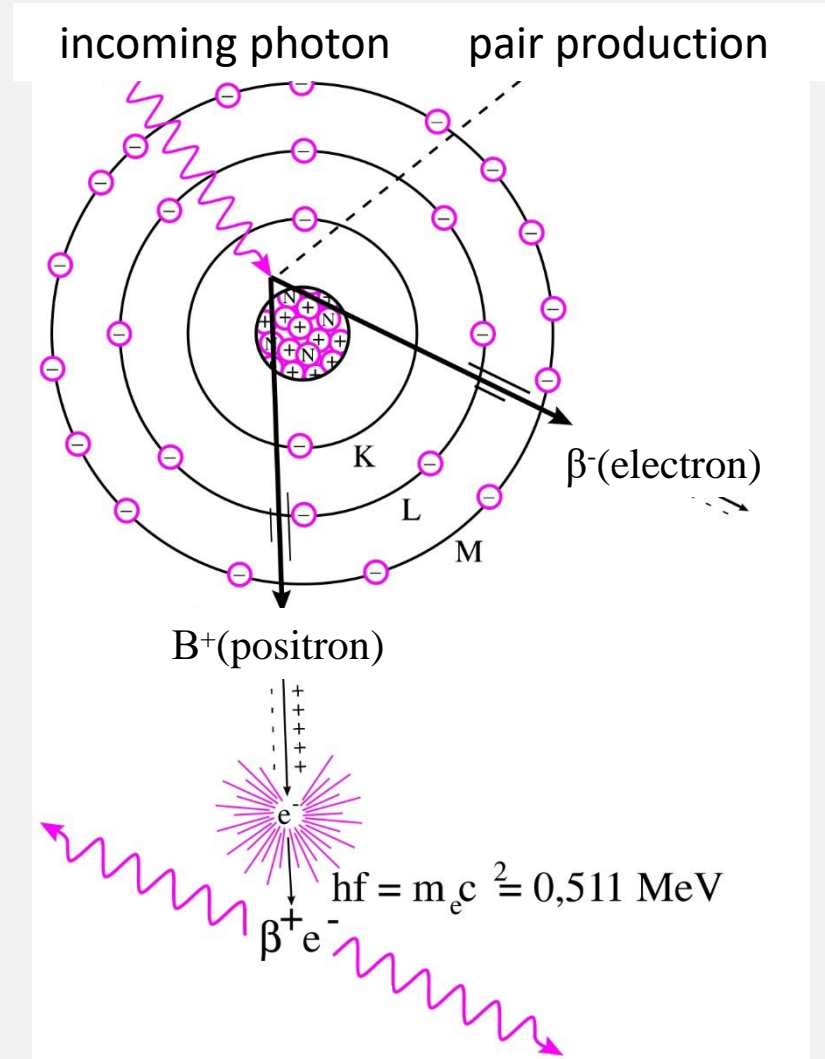
## Pair production

energy balance:

$$hf = 2m_e c^2 + 2\frac{1}{2}m_e v^2$$

$$hf \geq 2m_e c^2$$

$$hf \geq 1.02 \text{ MeV}$$



# Interaction of X-ray with matter

Law of radiation attenuation:  $J = J_0 e^{-\mu x}$

$\mu$  depends on the density of absorber!

BUT! Ratio of  $\mu$  and the density is constant

$$\mu_m = \frac{\mu}{\rho}$$

$\mu_m$  [cm<sup>2</sup>/g]: mass attenuation coefficient

**Varies with photon energy and  
the atomic number of absorber**



With mass attenuation coefficient, the law of radiation attenuation:

$$J = J_0 e^{-\mu_m x_m}$$

$$x_m = \rho x \quad \mu_m = \frac{\mu}{\rho}$$

$x_m$  [g/cm<sup>2</sup>]: surface density

$$\left. \begin{array}{l} \mu = \frac{0.693}{D} \\ D_m = \rho D \end{array} \right\} \quad \boxed{\mu_m = \frac{0.693}{D_m}}$$

Probability of interaction (absolute and relative) depends on

- the photon energy
- atomic number of absorber

$$\mu = \tau + \sigma + \kappa$$

photoeffect      Compton scattering      pair production

$$\mu_m = \tau_m + \sigma_m + K_m$$

	Atomic number	energy
photoeffect	$\tau_m \sim Z^3$	$\tau_m \sim 1/E^3$
Compton scattering	$\sim$ independent	slightly decreases

# Application of radiation filters

Modification of the properties (spectrum, special distribution) of radiation

**Inherent filter** elements.

e.g., anode material, wall of the tube, diaphragm etc.

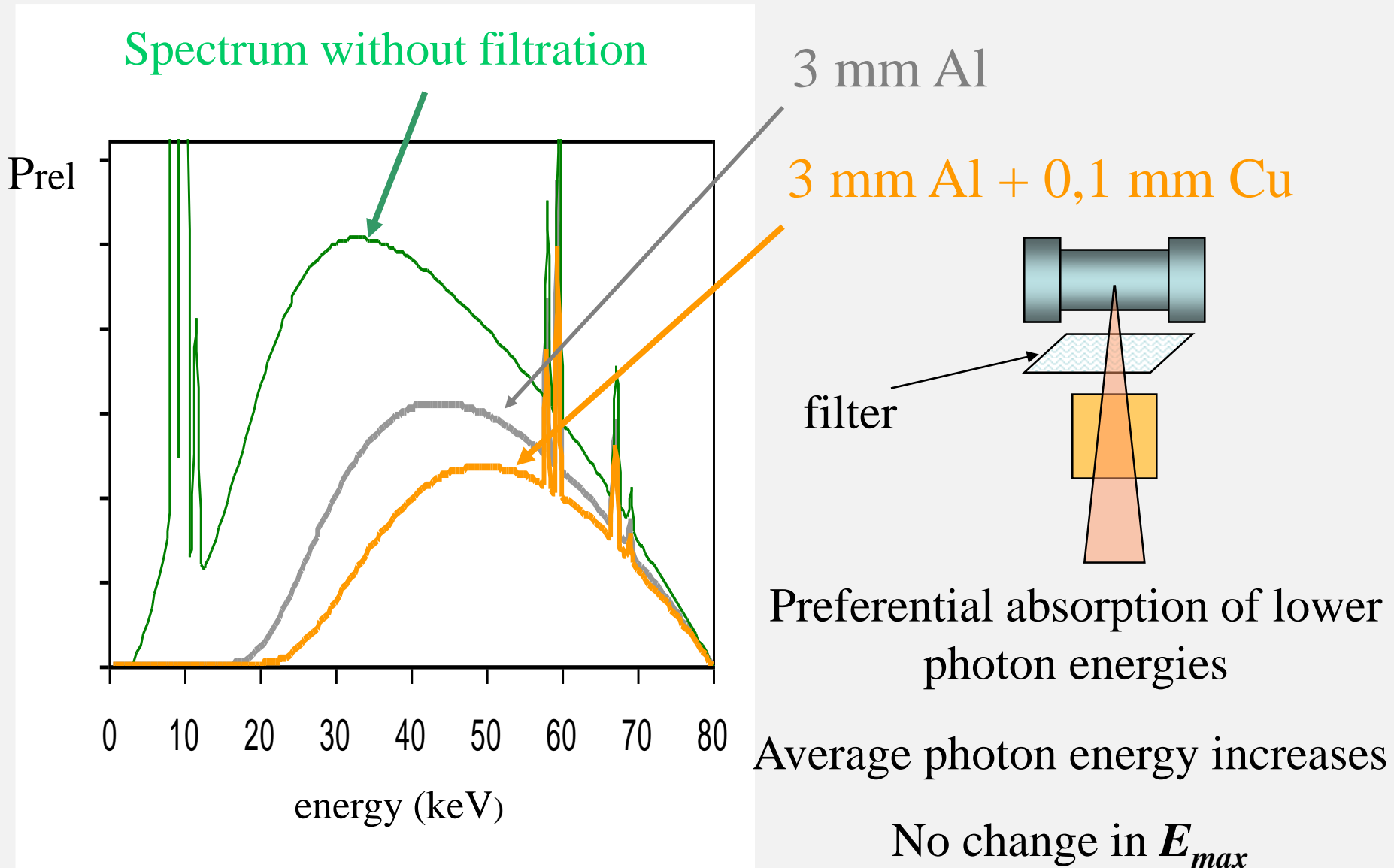
**External filters,**

typically Al or Cu plates.

***Disadvantage:*** reduces the intensity  
increases the exposition time

***Advantage:*** reduces – approximately 80% — the exposure of the patient

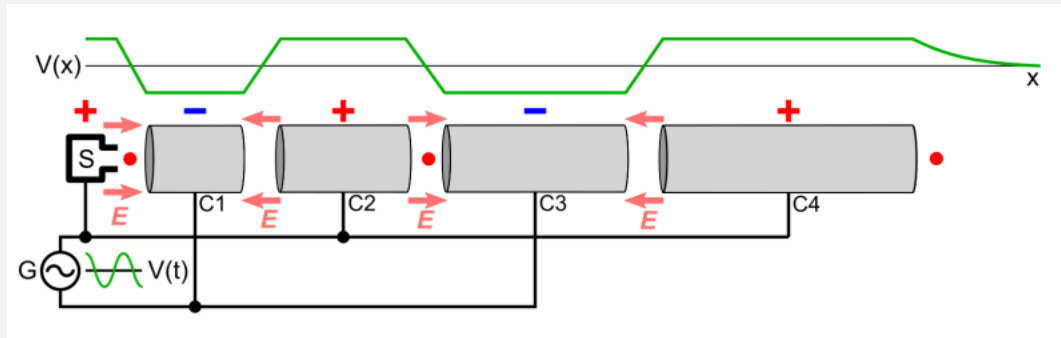
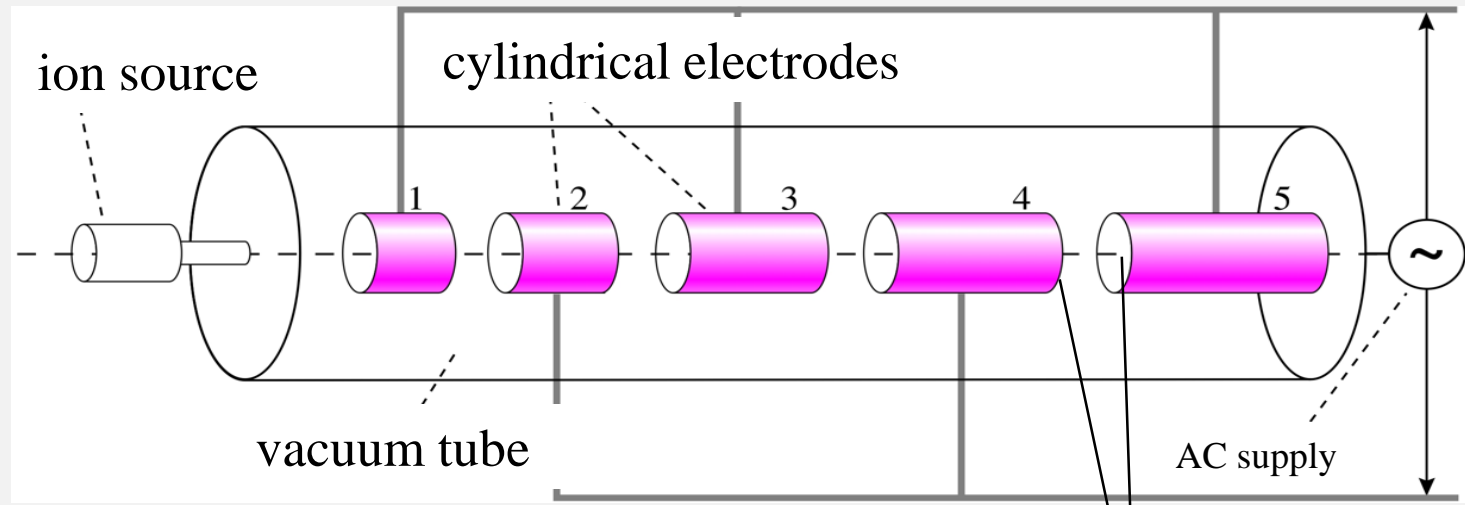
# Application of radiation filters



Special ways of X-ray production:

particle accelerators

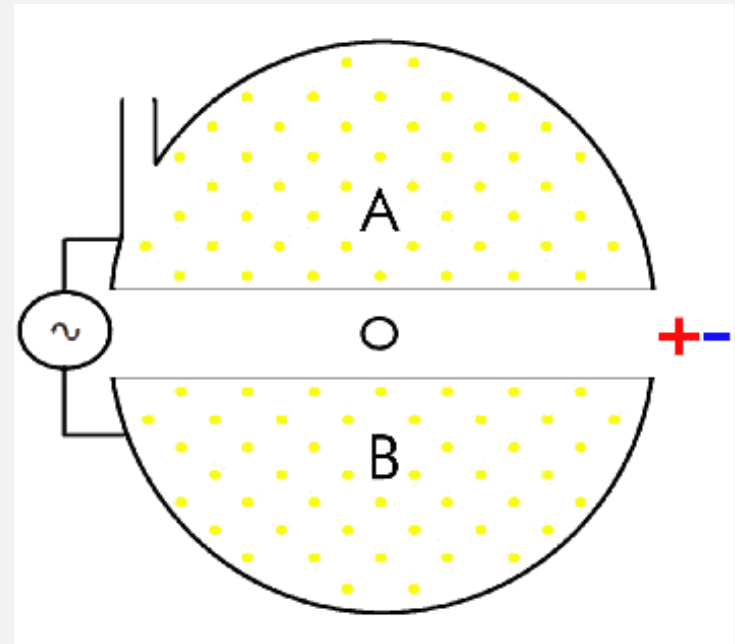
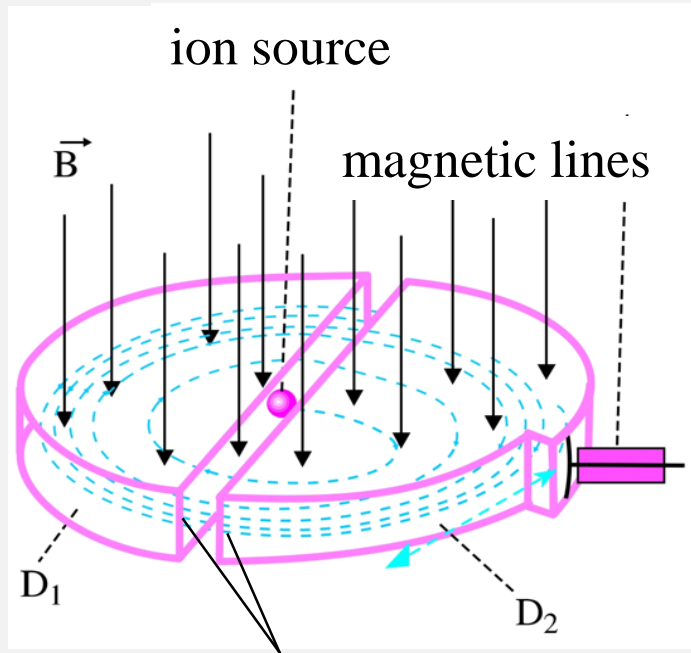
# Linear accelerators



accelerations

Applications  
in radiation  
therapy  
(4-25 MeV)

# Cyclotron



accelerations

magnetic field  $\rightarrow$  Lorentz force  $\rightarrow$  circular path  
electric field  $\rightarrow$  acceleration, increasing radius  
medical application: production of PET radionuclids

# ***Checklist***

*Structure of X-ray tube*

*Parameters of X-ray tube*

*Mechanism of generation of Bremsstrahlung and characterization of its spectrum*

*Interpretation of  $\lambda_{\min}$*

*Mechanism of generation of characteristic radiation and characterization of its spectrum*

*Parameters influencing the spectra of X-ray*

*Benefits of the application of outer filters*



*Damjanovich, Fidy, Szöllősi: Medical biophysics*

II. 3.1

3.1.1

3.1.2

3.1.3

3.1.4

3.1.5

3.1.6