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Tuning the thickness of black phosphorus via hydrogen plasma treatment

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Introduction:

Black phosphorus (BP), consisting of a weak van der Waals interlayer interaction and strong in-plane bonds, has high carrier mobility and tunable band gap (0.3-2.0 eV), offering properties for electric and optoelectronic devices [1-3]. Here, we report a controllable thinning method by using hydrogen plasma etching to thin down mechanically exfoliated BP flakes.

Materials and Methods:

BP flakes were mechanically exfoliated from bulk BP crystals onto Si substrates consisting of a 300nm-thick SiO₂ layer. After exfoliation, the H₂ plasma treatment was carried out on the BP flakes by using a plasma ions immersion implantation (PIII) system. Atomic force microscope, optical microscopy and Raman techniques was used to identify process conditions.

Results and Discussion:

After hydrogen plasma treatment, the BP flake display a uniform color change, which indicates decreasing thickness (Figure 1) [4]. Figure 2 shows the Raman spectra before and after 15 min hydrogen plasma treatment. While no significant variations of the peak positions are observed, the crystallinity of the BP flake remains intact after plasma treatment.

Conclusion:

Not only the thickness of the BP flakes can be controlled, but also the defects of the exposed BP surface are removed after plasma treatment. It is expected to improve the electrical performance of BP based field-effect transistor (FET). This method provides a new way to fabricate BP-based electronic and optoelectronic devices in the future.

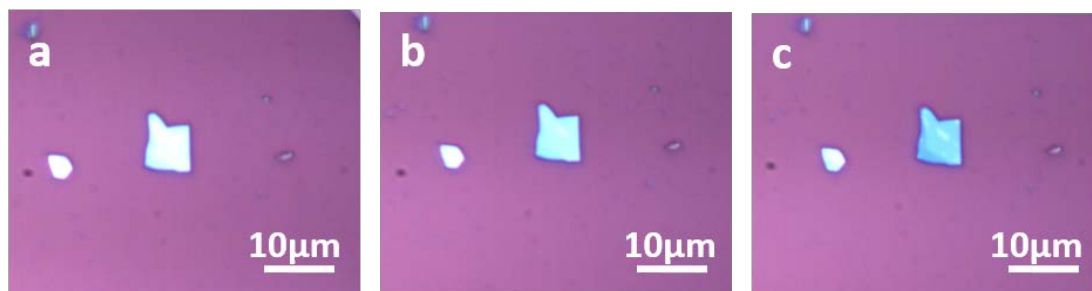


Figure 1 OM images of a BP flake (a) as-exfoliated, under (b) 2 min and (c) 4 min H₂ plasma treatment.

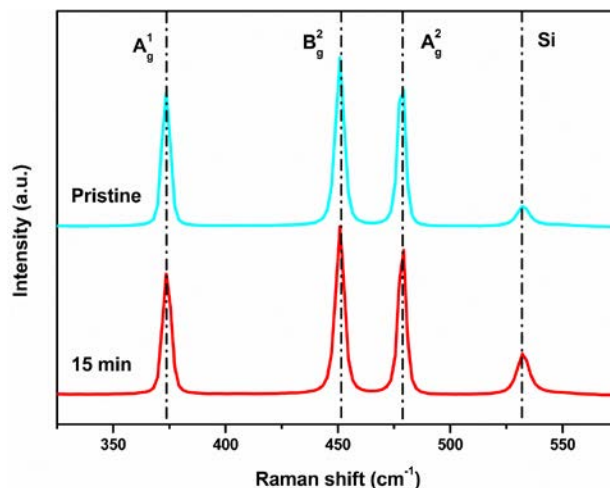


Figure 2 Raman spectra of a BP flake before and after 15 min hydrogen plasma etching.

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