Particle production at very low and intermediate transverse momenta in d+Au and Au+Au collisions

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The transverse momentum ($p_T$) spectra of identified charged particles have been measured at very low and intermediate transverse momenta in Au+Au collisions at $\sqrt{s_{NN}} = 62.4$ GeV and d+Au collisions at $\sqrt{s_{NN}} = 200$ GeV using the PHOBOS detector at RHIC. New results on charged particle production at very low $p_T$ in central Au+Au collisions at $\sqrt{s_{NN}} = 200$ GeV in the centrality intervals 0-6% and 6-15% are presented. A comparison of the PHOBOS low-$p_T$ data with predictions of a recent optical model is shown. The shapes of $m_T$ spectra for d+Au and Au+Au collisions are compared.

1. Introduction

In nucleus-nucleus collisions, an enhanced production of low-$p_T$ particles could signal new long-wavelength physics phenomena [1, 2]. It is also expected that yields of particles with higher masses, like protons and antiprotons can be modified due to collective transverse expansion of the system [3, 4]. Measurements at very low $p_T$ can also provide a critical test for models predicting a pronounced modification of the low-$p_T$ particle emission pattern, e.g. [5].
The PHOBOS experiment has the unique capability to measure charged particles at transverse momenta as low as 30, 90 and 140 MeV/c for charged pions, kaons and for protons and antiprotons, respectively, using a multi-layer, magnetic spectrometer. Yields at very low transverse momenta are determined using a reconstruction procedure developed to look for particles which range out in the fifth silicon layer of the PHOBOS spectrometer. A description of the "stopping algorithm" is presented in [6]. At intermediate $p_T$, particle momentum and charge are obtained from the curvature of particle trajectories in a 2T magnetic field and particle identification is provided by the specific energy loss ($dE/dx$) in the spectrometer and by Time-of-Flight detectors. Details on tracking, particle identification, event selection and centrality determination in the PHOBOS detector can be found in [7].

2. $p_T$ spectra in Au+Au collisions at $\sqrt{s_{NN}} = 62.4$ GeV

The preliminary particle yields for $\pi^\pm$, $K^\pm$, $p$ and $\bar{p}$ are presented in Fig. 1 for three centrality intervals: 0-15%, 15-30% and 30-50%. The data are corrected for detector effects (acceptance, efficiency, momentum resolution) and background particles including feed-down from weak decays and secondary particles produced in the beam pipe and detector material. The rapidity coverage of measured yields extends from about 0.4 to 1.4 for $\pi^\pm$, from 0.2 to 1.2 for $K^\pm$ and from 0.2 to 1.1 for $p$ and $\bar{p}$. The preliminary results on antiparticle to particle ratios have been obtained for the 15% most central collisions. The results of $0.84 \pm 0.02$ (stat.) $\pm 0.08$ (syst.) for $K^-/K^+$ and $0.37 \pm 0.01$ (stat.) $\pm 0.06$ (syst.) for $\bar{p}/p$ fit smoothly into the energy evolution of antiparticle to particle ratios from the AGS up to the highest RHIC energy.

Low-$p_T$ yields of $(\pi^+ + \pi^-)$, $(K^+ + K^-)$ and $(p + \bar{p})$ near mid-rapidity in Au+Au collisions at $\sqrt{s_{NN}} = 62.4$ GeV, corrected for detector effects and background particles, are shown in Fig. 2 in the same centrality bins. One can see that $(K^+ + K^-)$ and $(p + \bar{p})$ yields are quite consistent with extrapolations of blast wave functions (BWF) [4] fitted to the spectra at higher transverse momenta. Some disagreement between the measured yield of pions and BWF at low $p_T$ could be attributed to a contribution from resonances which is not included in the model. A similar behavior was observed for $p_T$ yields measured in the 15% most central Au+Au collisions at $\sqrt{s_{NN}} = 62.4$ GeV.
$\sqrt{s_{NN}} = 200 \text{ GeV}$ [6], indicating that at both energies no significant enhancement of particle production is observed at very low $p_T$. Also, a flattening of the $(p + \bar{p})$ spectra down to very low transverse momentum is observed. This could be a consequence of collective transverse expansion of the medium created in heavy ion collisions at RHIC.

Figure 2. ($\pi^+ + \pi^-$), ($K^+ + K^-$) and $(p + \bar{p})$ yields at very low $p_T$ in Au+Au collisions at $\sqrt{s_{NN}} = 62.4 \text{ GeV}$. Blast wave fits to the intermediate $p_T$ data (solid lines) are extrapolated to low $p_T$ (dashed lines).

3. Low-$p_T$ yields in central Au+Au collisions at $\sqrt{s_{NN}} = 200 \text{ GeV}$

The spectra of ($\pi^+ + \pi^-$), ($K^+ + K^-$) and $(p + \bar{p})$ at very low transverse momentum in the 15% most central Au+Au collisions at $\sqrt{s_{NN}} = 200 \text{ GeV}$, measured in the PHOBOS experiment, are presented in [6]. In order to confront the extrapolations from a recent optical model [5], which were available only for more central collisions, with measurements, the published data sample was split into two finer centrality bins. Fig. 3 shows the $p_T$ yields, corrected for detector effects and background particles, measured in the centrality intervals 0-6% and 6-15%. In Fig. 4 the pion yield measured in the 6% most central Au+Au collisions is compared to the optical model predictions for the spectrum of negative pions at mid-rapidity. The originally published

Figure 3. ($\pi^+ + \pi^-$), ($K^+ + K^-$) and $(p + \bar{p})$ yields at very low $p_T$ in 0-6% and 6-15% central Au+Au collisions at $\sqrt{s_{NN}} = 200 \text{ GeV}$. 

Figure 4. Optical model predictions [5, 8] for pion spectra at low $p_T$ compared to PHOBOS data (see text for details).
It is interesting to compare the particle yields at very low and intermediate \( p_T \) in d+Au and central Au+Au collision at the same energy of \( \sqrt{s_{NN}} = 200 \text{ GeV} \). Yields of \((\pi^+ + \pi^-), (K^+ + K^-)\) and \((p + \bar{p})\) in d+Au collisions, corrected for detector effects and background particles, are shown in Fig. 5. One can see that in d+Au collisions \((\pi^+ + \pi^-)\) and \((p + \bar{p})\) \( m_T \) spectra are similar while the \((K^+ + K^-)\) spectrum is systematically lower (by a factor of about 2) due to strangeness suppression. The \( m_T \) spectra for the 15% most central Au+Au collisions measured by the PHOBOS [5] and PHENIX [9] experiments at very low and intermediate transverse momenta, respectively, are also shown in Fig. 5. In order to compare the shapes of the \( m_T \) spectra, inverse local slope parameters were calculated by fitting locally exponential functions to each spectrum (see bottom panels of Fig. 5). We can see that for d+Au collisions local slopes are similar for all particle species both at low and intermediate \( p_T \). In contrast, Au+Au spectral shapes are similar at higher transverse masses (\( m_T > 1.7 \text{ GeV} \)) while at low \( m_T \) a flattening of \((K^+ + K^-)\) and \((p + \bar{p})\) spectra is observed. This flattening of the \((p + \bar{p})\) spectrum is significantly stronger than the one observed for the spectra of charged kaons. One can also see that the \( m_T \) dependence of the local slopes of the \((\pi^+ + \pi^-)\) \( m_T \) spectrum for Au+Au collision is consistent with that found for the local slopes of \((\pi^+ + \pi^-), (K^+ + K^-)\) and \((p + \bar{p})\) spectra in d+Au collisions.

5. Summary

Yields of pions, kaons and protons and antiprotons at very low and intermediate \( p_T \) near mid-rapidity in Au+Au collisions at \( \sqrt{s_{NN}} = 62.4 \) and 200 \text{ GeV}, measured in the PHOBOS...
experiment, indicate that there is no evidence for enhanced production of particles at very low transverse momentum. The pion low-$p_T$ data can constrain the recent optical model predictions. A significant flattening of the $(p + \bar{p}) m_T$ spectrum down to very low $p_T$ is observed in central Au+Au collisions at both energies which could be a consequence of the collective transverse expansion of the system. In d+Au collisions, no flattening is observed and the shapes of the $m_T$ spectra are similar at very low and intermediate $p_T$.

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