Photo- and Hadrodisintegration constraints on massive relics decaying into neutrinos

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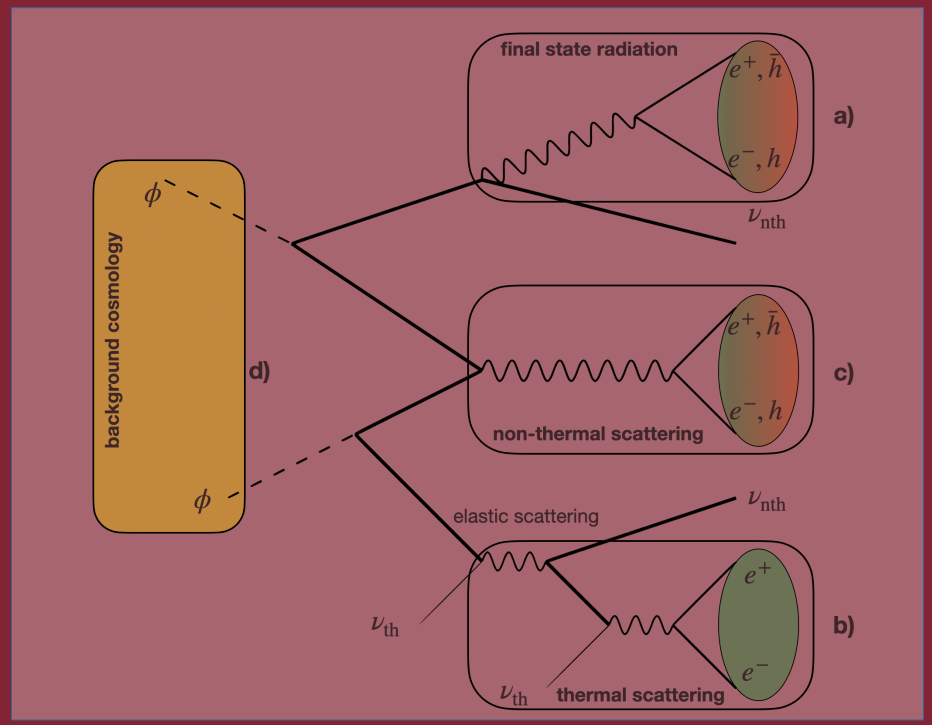
Based on 2505.01492

w/ Sara Bianco, Frederik Depta, Thomas Hambye,
Marco Hufnagel & Kai Schmidt-Hoberg

Dark Matter and Neutrinos

20.05.2025

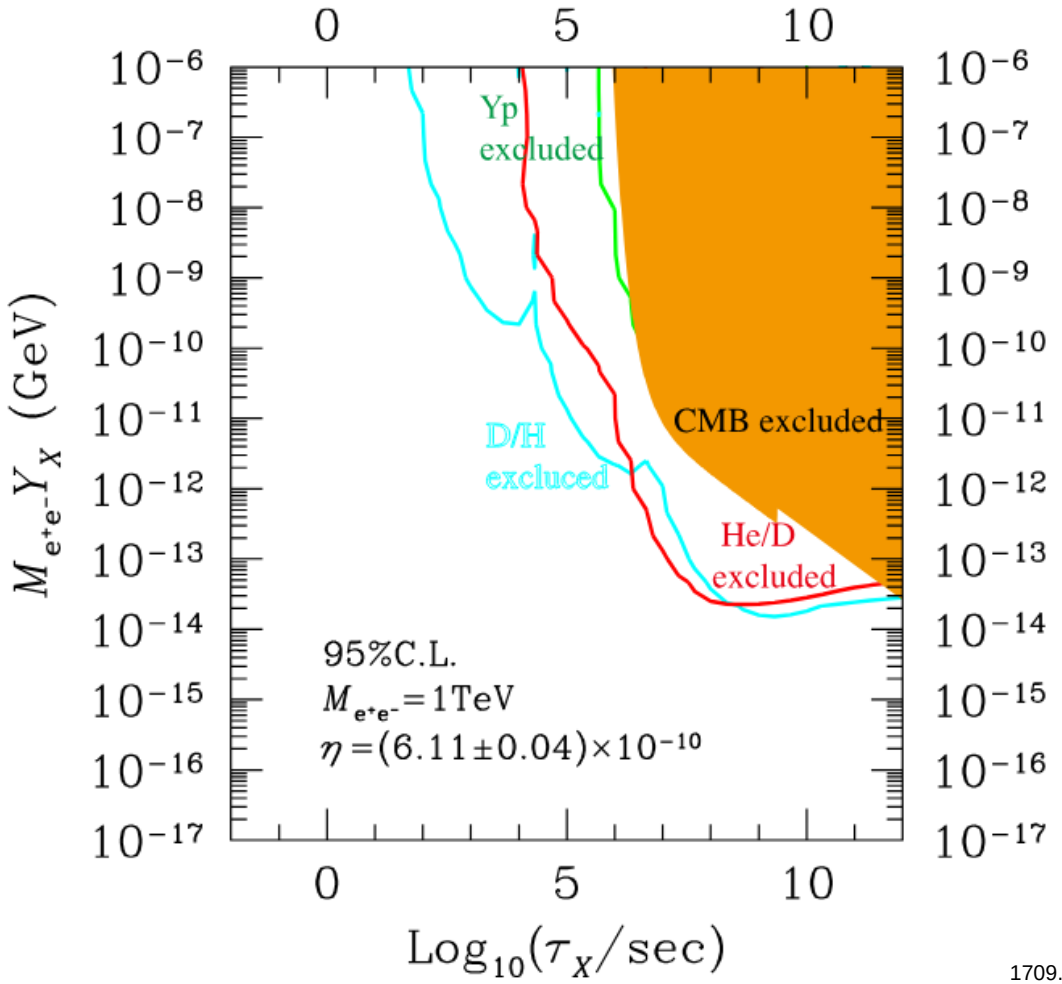
Institut Henri Poincaré, Paris



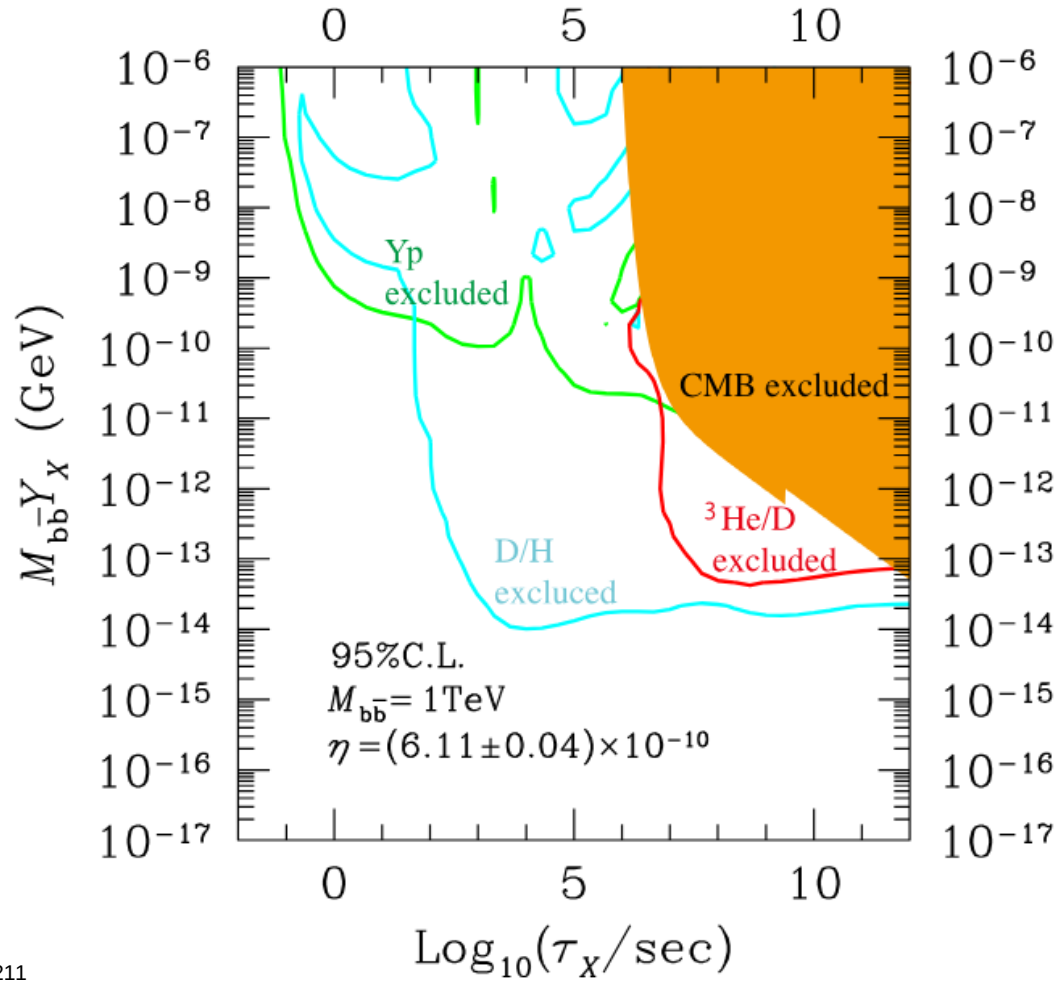
Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Research Council Executive Agency. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them. This work is supported by the ERC STG grant (``AstroDarkLS'', grant No. 101117510).

Can you hide an unstable Dark Sector in neutrinos?

$\phi \to e^+e^-$

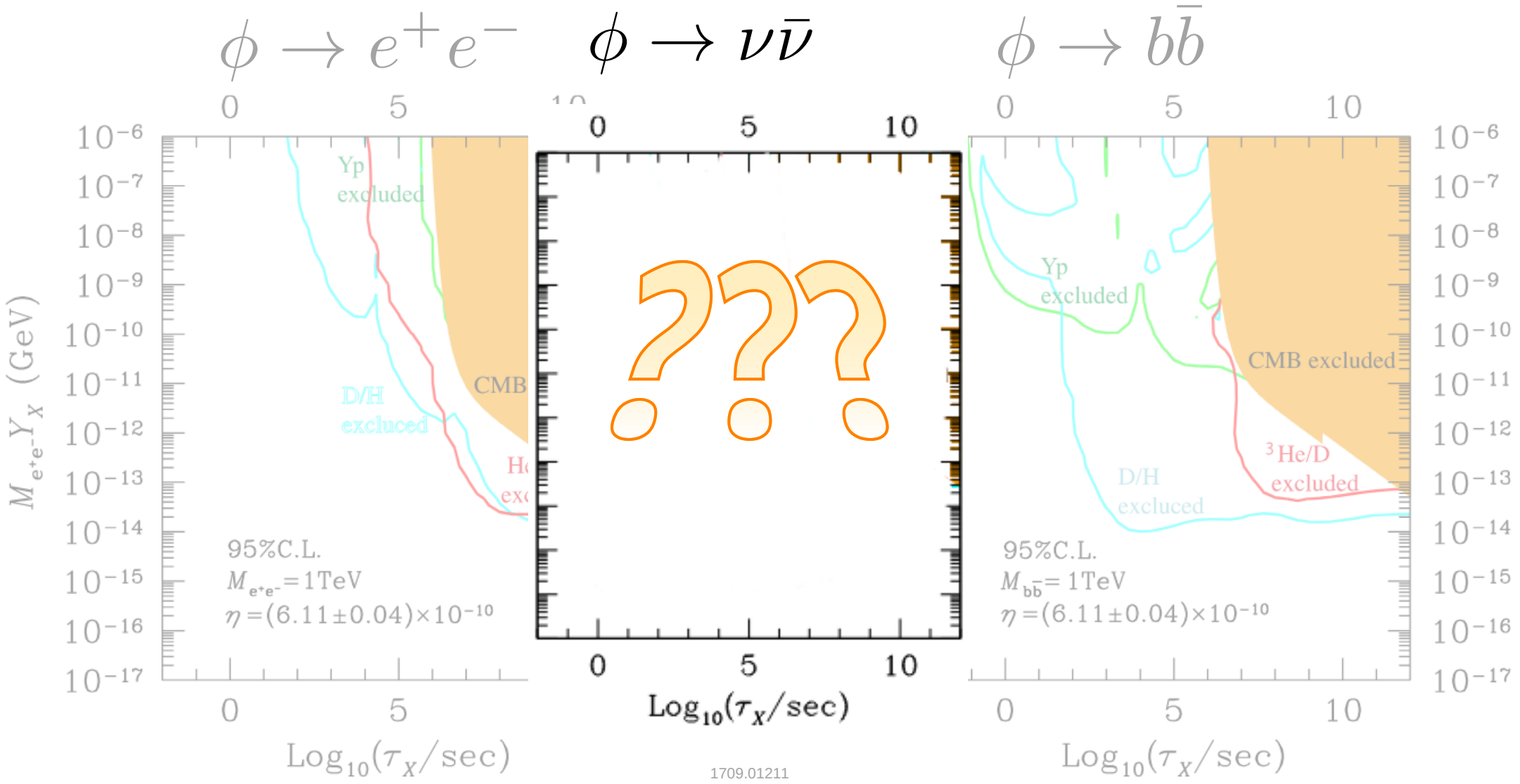


$\phi \to b\bar{b}$



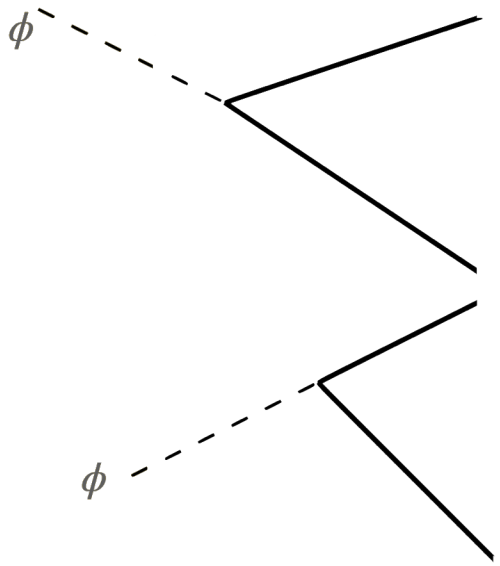
1709.01211

Can you hide an unstable Dark Sector in neutrinos?



Neutrino injections ≠ Injection of only neutrinos

How much harm can a neutrino do?



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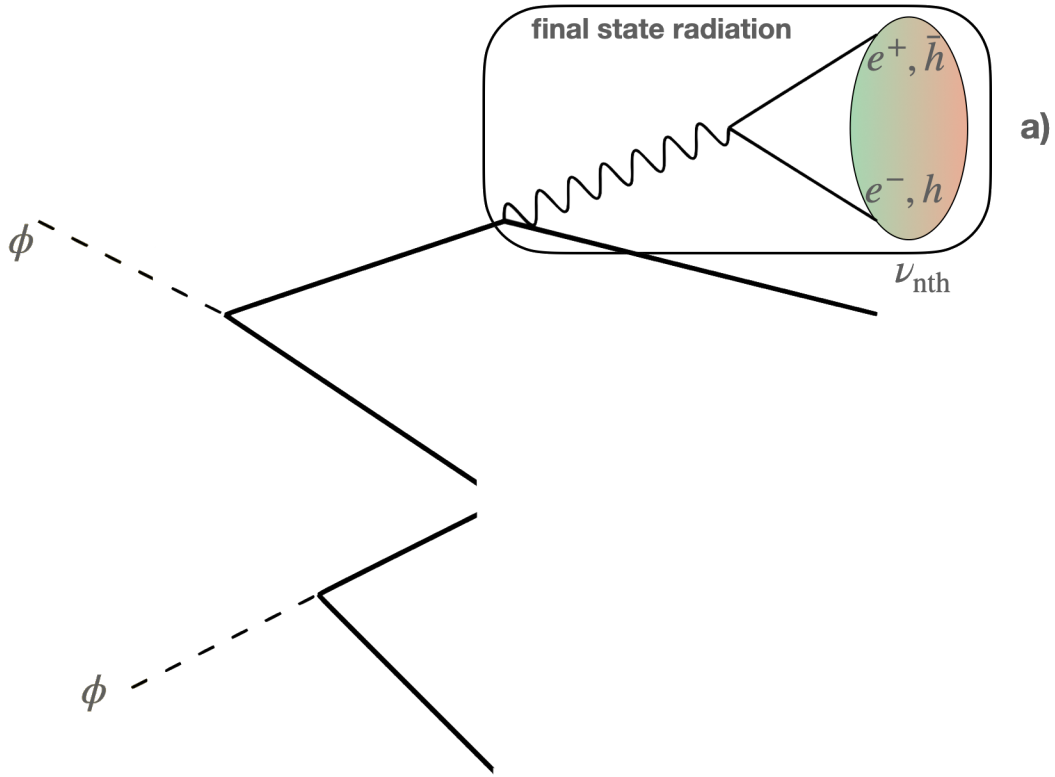
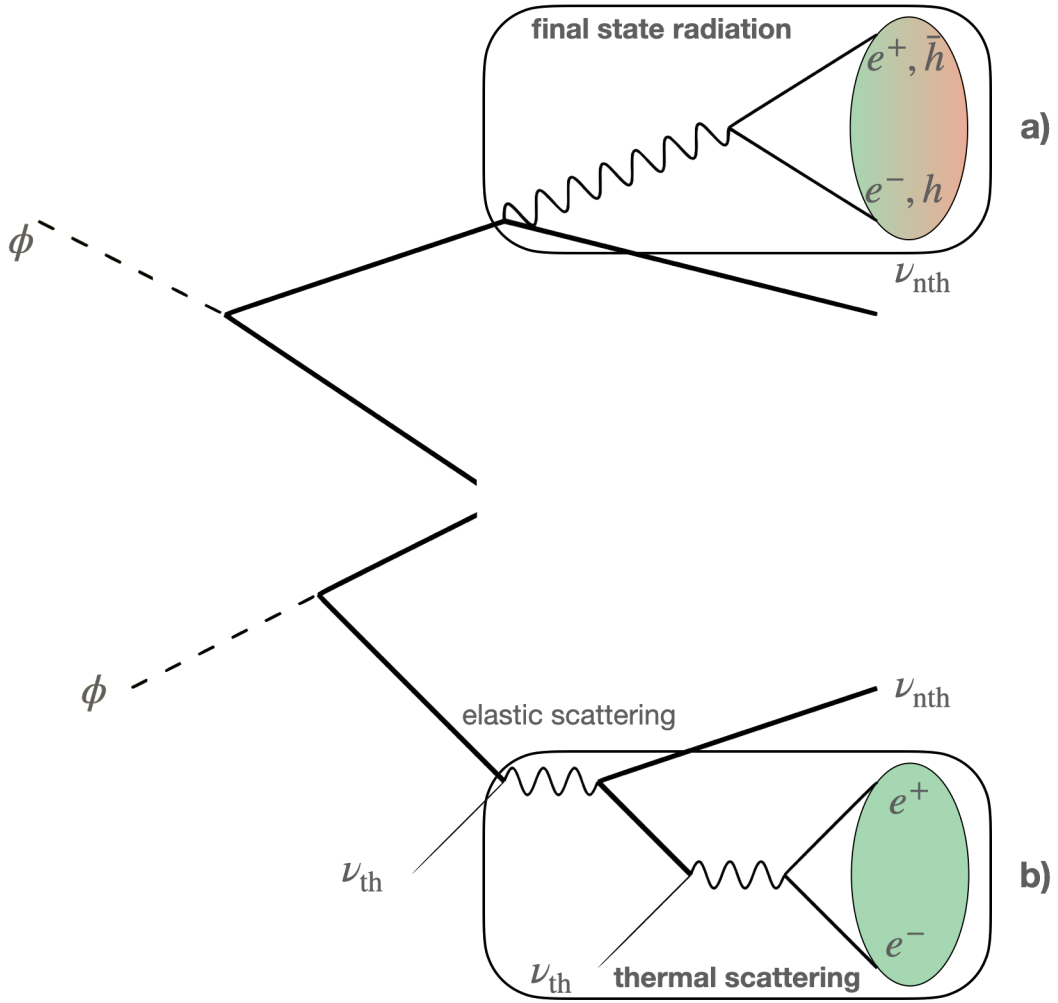


How much harm can a neutrino do?

a) **Final-state radiation**, injects **EM** and **hadrons**

Neutrino injections ≠ Injection of only neutrinos

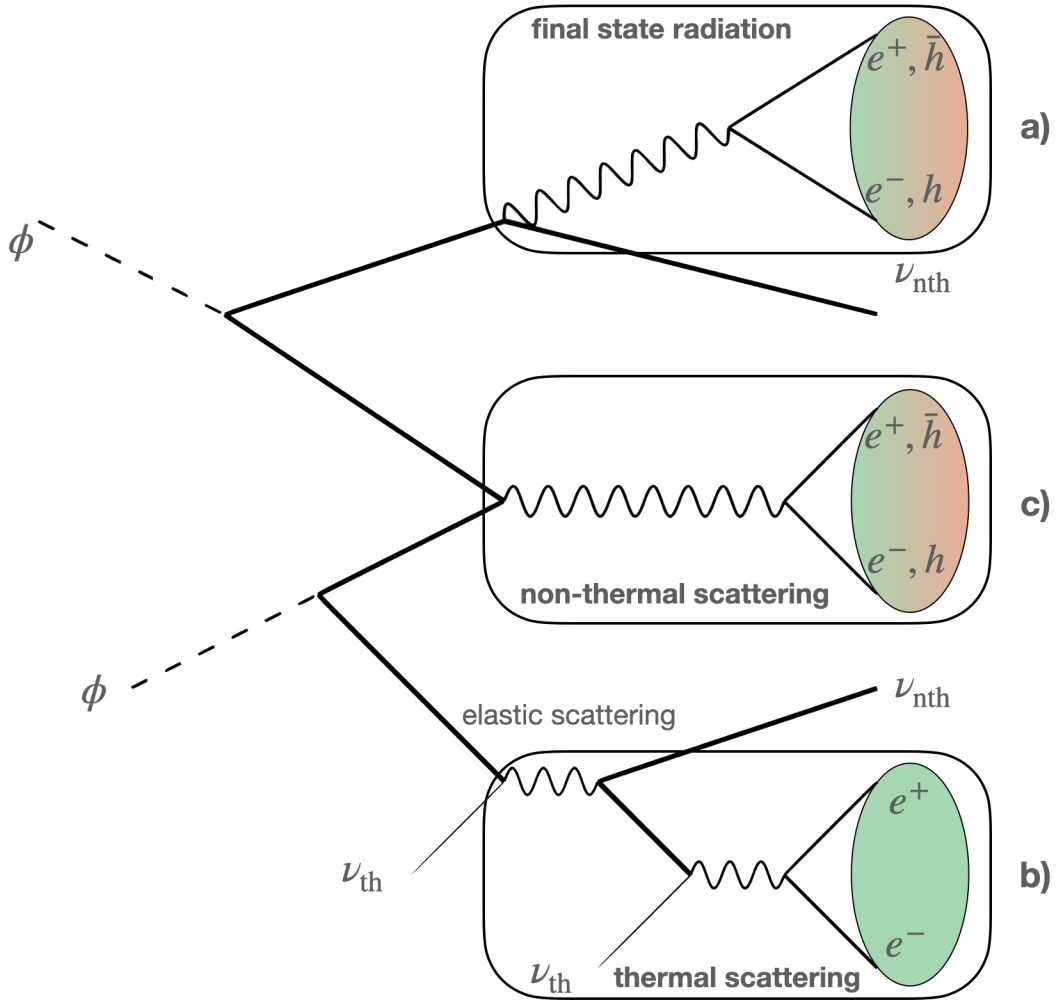


How much harm can a neutrino do?

a) **Final-state radiation**, injects **EM** and **hadrons**

b) **Thermal scattering**, injects **EM**

Neutrino injections ≠ Injection of only neutrinos



How much harm can a neutrino do?

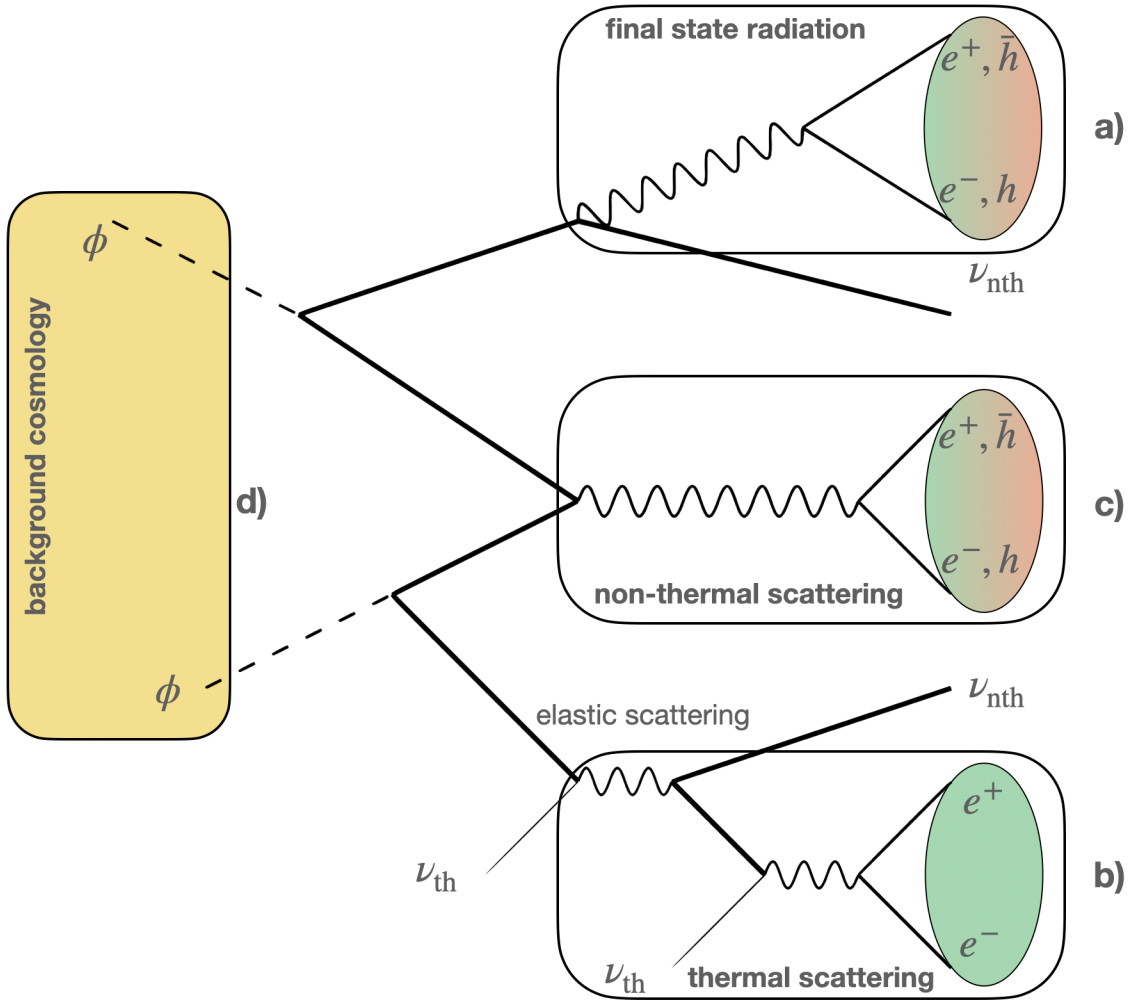
a) **Final-state radiation**, injects **EM** and **hadrons**

b) **Thermal scattering**, injects **EM**

c) **Non-thermal scattering**, injects **EM** and **hadrons**

Neutrino cascade

Neutrino injections ≠ Injection of only neutrinos



How much harm can a neutrino do?

a) **Final-state radiation**, injects **EM** and **hadrons**

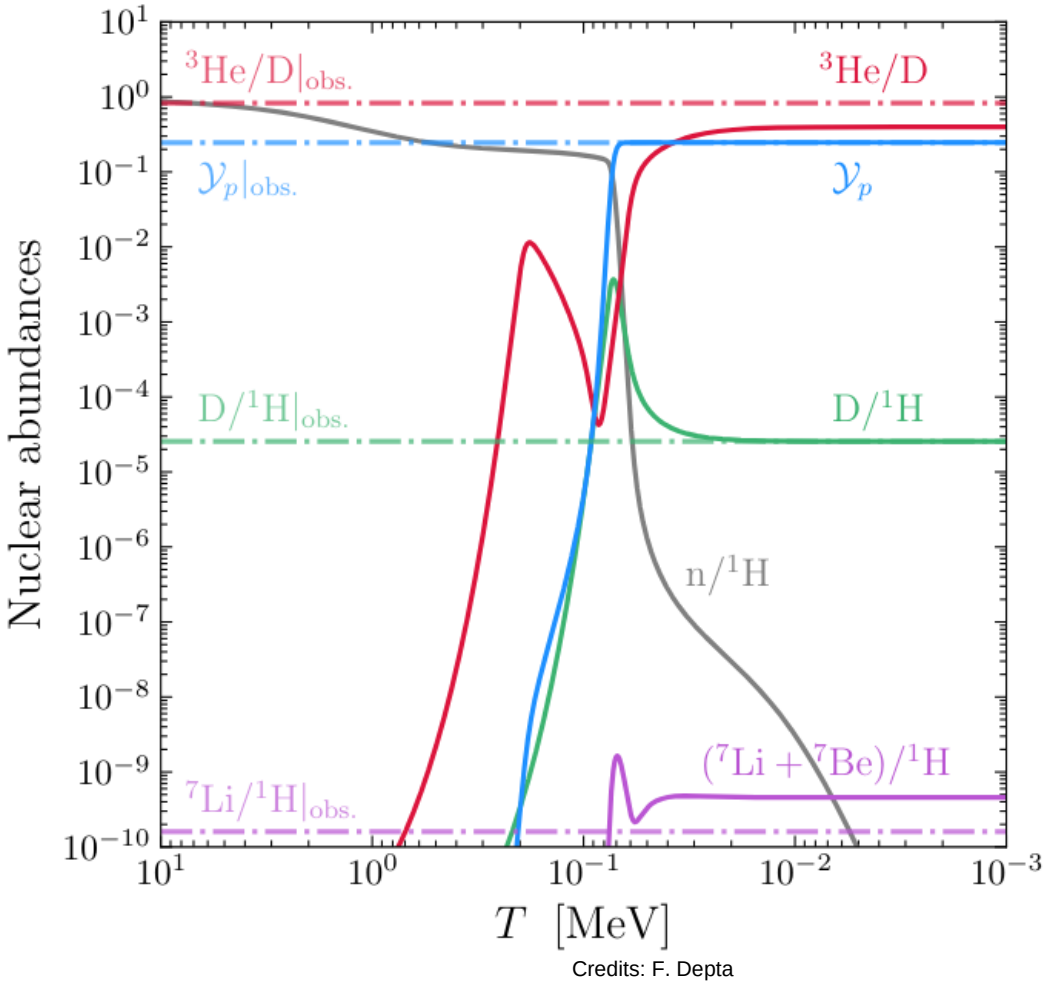
b) **Thermal scattering**, injects **EM**

c) **Non-thermal scattering**, injects **EM** and **hadrons**

d) Changes in the **background cosmology**

Interlude: BBN data, photodisintegration & hadrodisintegration

We use a modified version of AlterBBN [1806.11095].



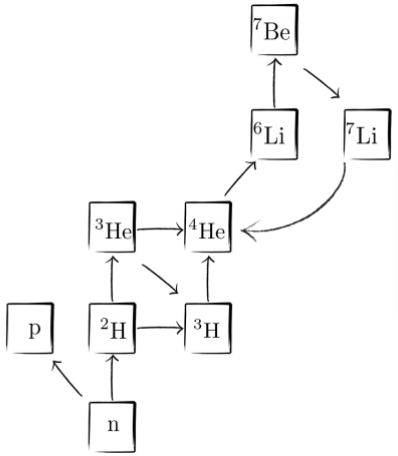
Credits: F. Depta

$$\mathcal{Y}_p = (2.45 \pm 0.03) \times 10^{-1}$$

$$\mathrm{D}/^1\mathrm{H} = (2.547 \pm 0.029) \times 10^{-5}$$

$$^3\mathrm{He}/\mathrm{D} = (8.3 \pm 1.5) \times 10^{-1}$$

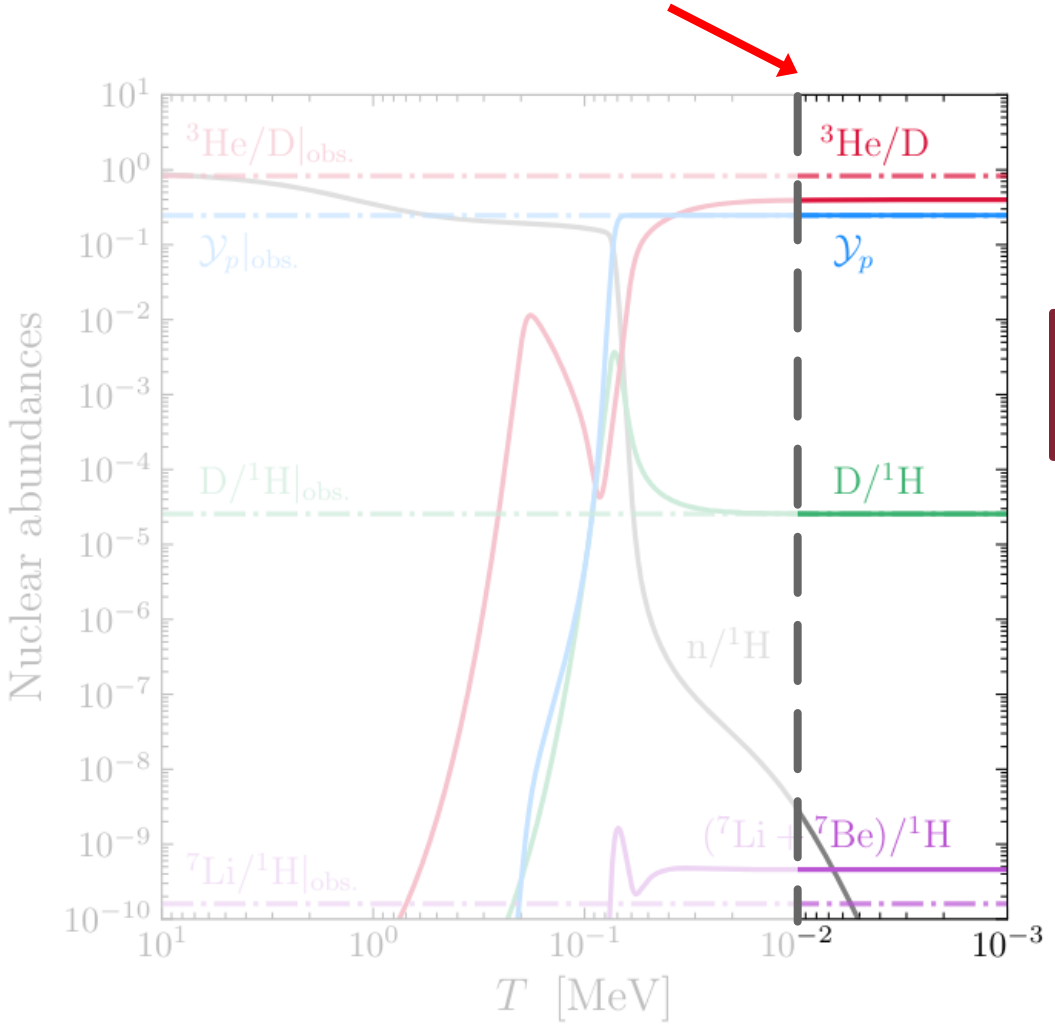
~~$$^7\mathrm{Li}/^1\mathrm{H} = (1.6 \pm 0.3) \times 10^{-10}$$~~



Reaction chain of Standard BBN

Interlude: BBN data, photodisintegration & hadrodisintegration

Abundances are effectively fixed by $T \simeq 10\,\text{keV}$ ($t \sim 10^4\,\text{s}$)



Credits: F. Depta

Photodisintegration

=

late-time destruction of the light elements by **EM** particles

$$\Rightarrow \tau_\phi \gtrsim 10^4\,\text{s}$$ allows factorisation of the processes

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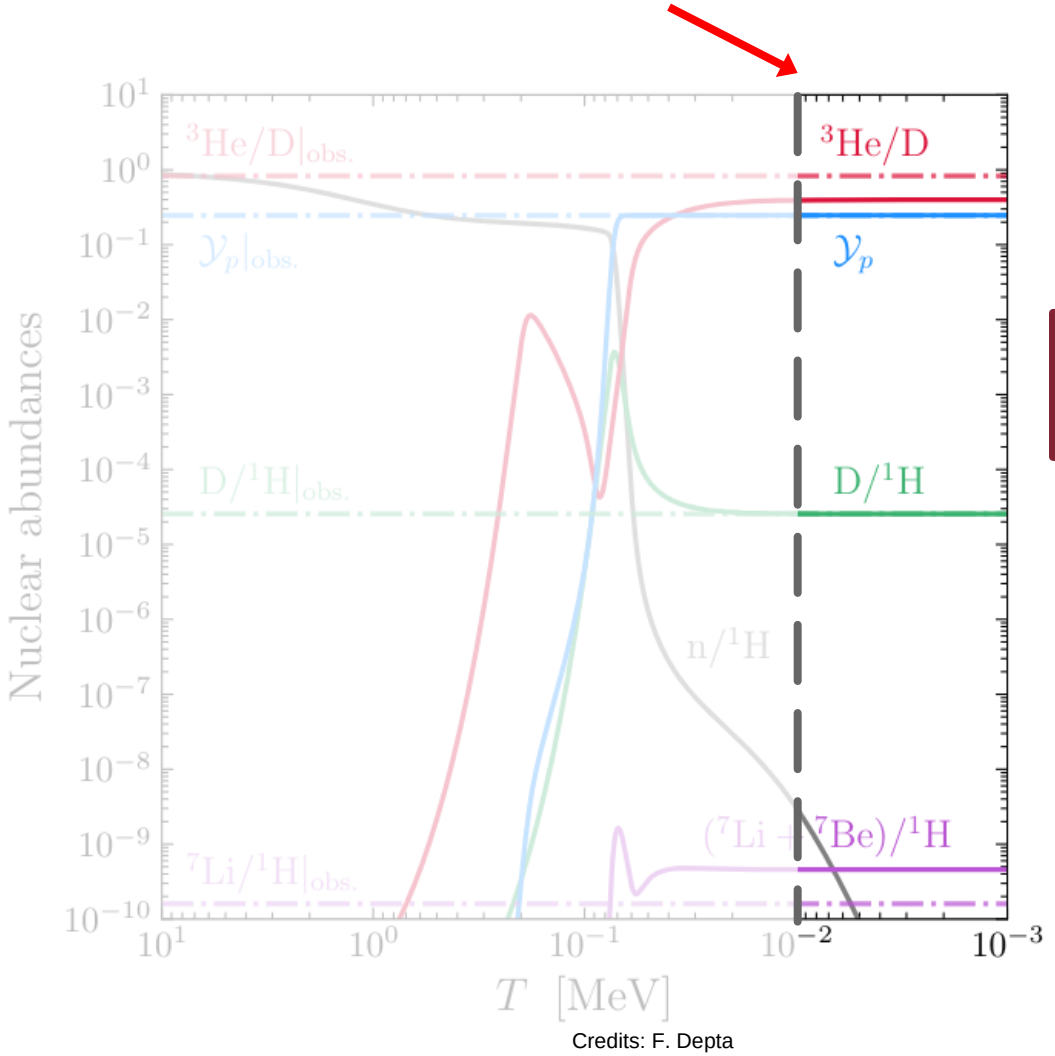

Credits: F. Depta

Photodisintegration

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late-time destruction of the light elements by **EM** particles

$$\Rightarrow \tau_\phi \gtrsim 10^4\,\text{s}$$ allows factorisation of the processes

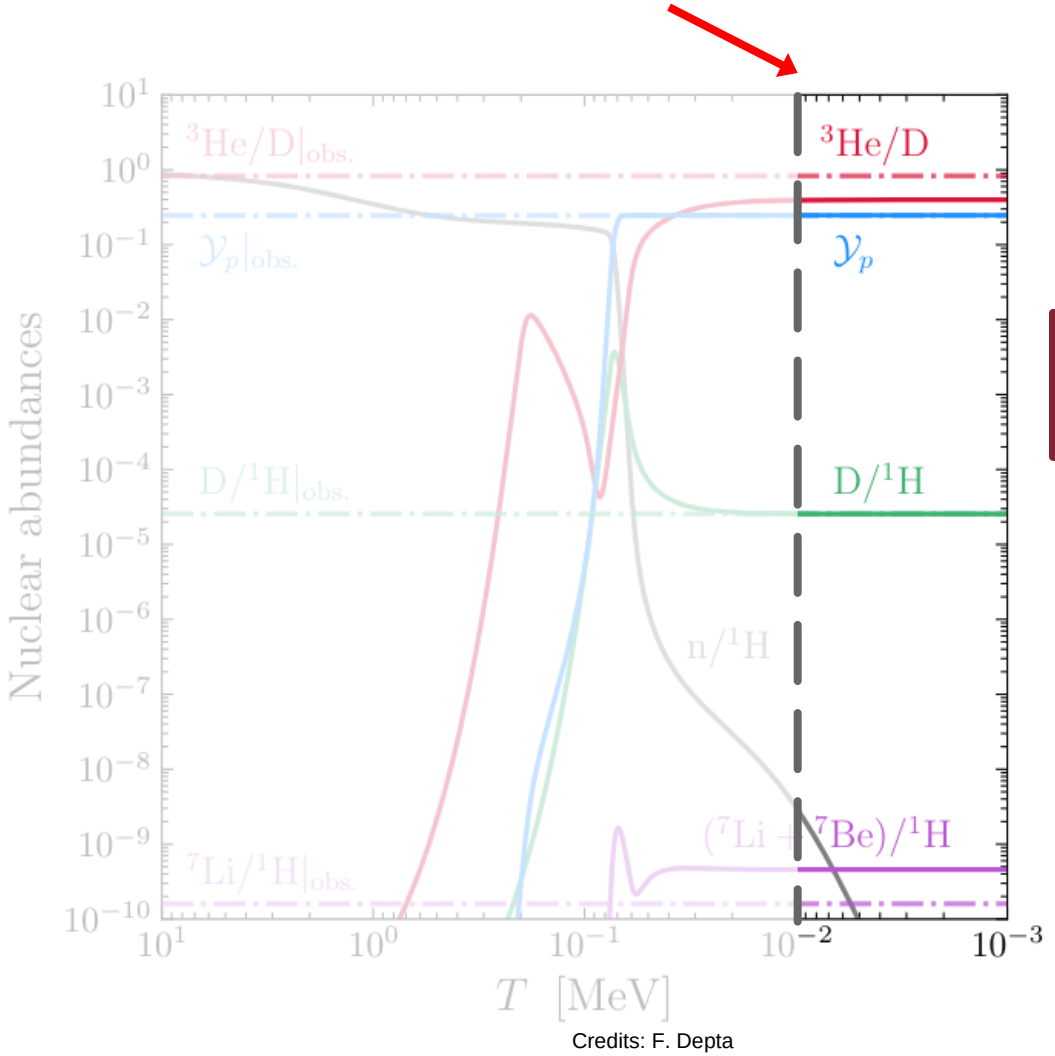
Rapid scattering on the CMB induces a **universal spectrum**

$$\text{f}_{\gamma,\text{univ}}(T,E) \sim \begin{cases} K_0 (E/E_X)^{-3/2} & , \quad E < E_X \\ K_0 (E/E_X)^{-2} & , \quad E_X < E < E_{ee}^{\text{th}} \\ 0 & , \quad E > E_{ee}^{\text{th}} \end{cases}$$

$$E_X = m_e^2/(80T)\,, \quad E_{ee}^{\text{th}} = m_e^2/(22T)\,, \quad K_0 \propto E_0$$

Interlude: BBN data, photodisintegration & hadrodisintegration

Abundances are effectively fixed by $T \simeq 10\,\text{keV}$ ($t \sim 10^4\,\text{s}$)



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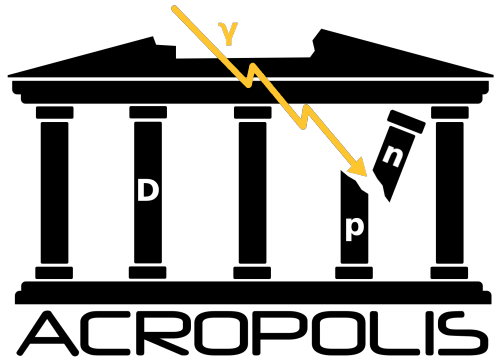


Numerical Framework **ACROPOLIS**
By Frederik, Marco and Kai
(2011.06518)

https://github.com/hep-mh/acropolis/tree/v2

$$\left[\frac{\mathrm{d}n_X}{\mathrm{d}t}\right]_{\text{photo}} = \sum_j n_j N_{j\gamma\to X} \int_0^\infty \mathrm{d}E\, \mathrm{f}_\gamma(E)\sigma_{j\gamma\to X}(E) - n_X \sum_{j'} \int_0^\infty \mathrm{d}E\, \mathrm{f}_\gamma(E)\sigma_{X\gamma\to j'}(E)$$

Interlude: BBN data, photodisintegration & hadrodisintegration

Hadrodisintegration treatment à la [astro-ph/0408426] and [1709.01211]:

Big-Bang Nucleosynthesis and Hadronic Decay of Long-Lived Massive Particles

Masahiro Kawasaki[(a)], Kazunori Kohri[(b)] and Takeo Moroi[(c)]

Revisiting Big-Bang Nucleosynthesis Constraints on Long-Lived Decaying Particles

Masahiro Kawasaki[(a,b)], Kazunori Kohri[(c,d)], Takeo Moroi[(e,b)], and Yoshitaro Takaesu[(e,f)]

Interlude: BBN data, photodisintegration & hadrodisintegration

Hadrodisintegration treatment à la [astro-ph/0408426] and [1709.01211]:

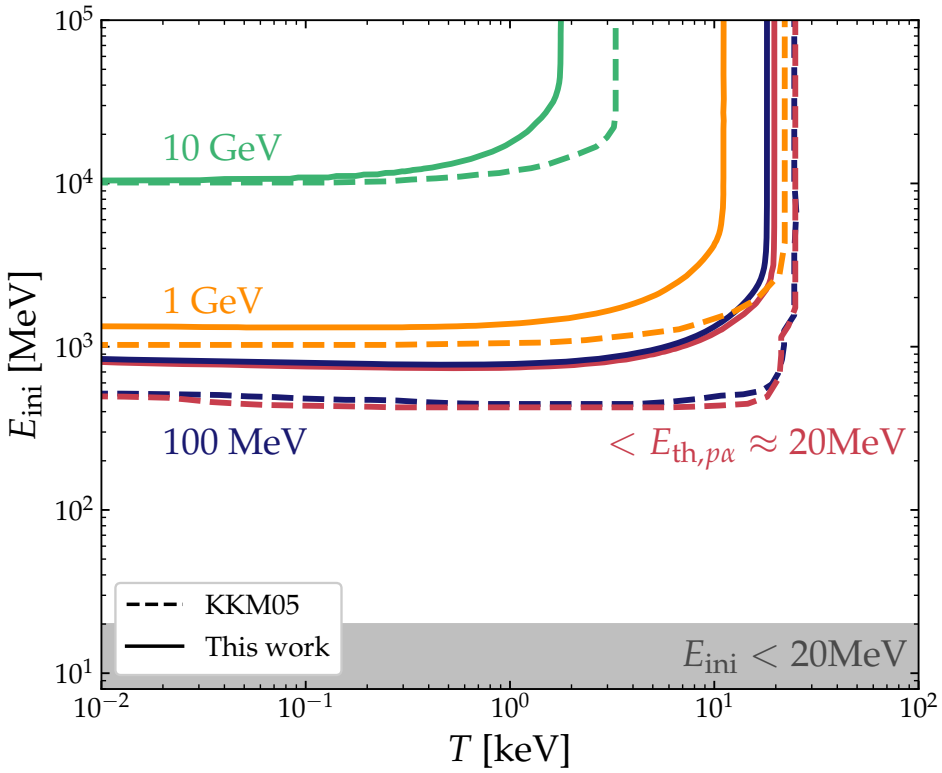
I. Inject hadrons (in our case: neutrons and protons)

Interlude: BBN data, photodisintegration & hadrodisintegration

Hadrodisintegration treatment à la [astro-ph/0408426] and [1709.01211]:

I. Inject hadrons (in our case: neutrons and protons)

II. Apply energy loss formalism*



* We actually found a small discrepancy with previous literature results.

Interlude: BBN data, photodisintegration & hadrodisintegration

Hadrodisintegration treatment à la [astro-ph/0408426] and [1709.01211]:

I. Inject hadrons (in our case: neutrons and protons)

II. Apply energy loss formalism

III. Calculate nuclear scattering and determine final products

Observation:

While PDI tends to destroy deuterium, HDI produces it from destroying helium-4.

Process	$i = n$	$i = p$	Reaction Type
(i, p_{BG}; 1)	$n + p_{BG} \to n + p$	$p + p_{BG} \to p + p$	elastic
(i, p_{BG}; 2)	$n + p_{BG} \to n + p + \pi$	$p + p_{BG} \to p + p + \pi$	inelastic
(i, p_{BG}; 3)	$n + p_{BG} \to n + n + \pi$	$p + p_{BG} \to p + n + \pi$	inelastic
(i, p_{BG}; 4)	$n + p_{BG} \to p + p + \pi$	$p + p_{BG} \to n + p + \pi$	inelastic
(i, p_{BG}; 5)	$n + p_{BG} \to p + p + \pi$	$p + p_{BG} \to n + n + \pi$	inelastic

Redistribute the kinetic energy

Process	$i = n$	$i = p$	Reaction Type
(i, α; 1)	$n + \alpha_{BG} \to n + \alpha$	$p + \alpha_{BG} \to p + \alpha$	elastic
(i, α; 2)	$n + \alpha_{BG} \to \mathrm{D} + \mathrm{T}$	$p + \alpha_{BG} \to \mathrm{D} + {}^3\mathrm{He}$	inelastic
(i, α; 3)	$n + \alpha_{BG} \to 2n + {}^3\mathrm{He}$	$p + \alpha_{BG} \to p + n + {}^3\mathrm{He}$	inelastic
(i, α; 4)	$n + \alpha_{BG} \to p + n + \mathrm{T}$	$p + \alpha_{BG} \to 2p + \mathrm{T}$	inelastic
(i, α; 5)	$n + \alpha_{BG} \to n + 2\mathrm{D}$	$p + \alpha_{BG} \to p + 2\mathrm{D}$	inelastic
(i, α; 6)	$n + \alpha_{BG} \to p + 2n + \mathrm{D}$	$p + \alpha_{BG} \to 2p + n + \mathrm{D}$	inelastic
(i, α; 7)	$n + \alpha_{BG} \to 2p + 3n$	$p + \alpha_{BG} \to 3p + 2n$	inelastic
(i, α; 8)	$n + \alpha_{BG} \to n + \alpha + \pi$	$p + \alpha_{BG} \to p + \alpha + \pi$	inelastic

Disintegrate ^{4}He

Interlude: BBN data, photodisintegration & hadrodisintegration

Hadrodisintegration treatment à la [astro-ph/0408426] and [1709.01211]:

I. Inject hadrons (in our case: neutrons and protons)

II. Apply energy loss formalism

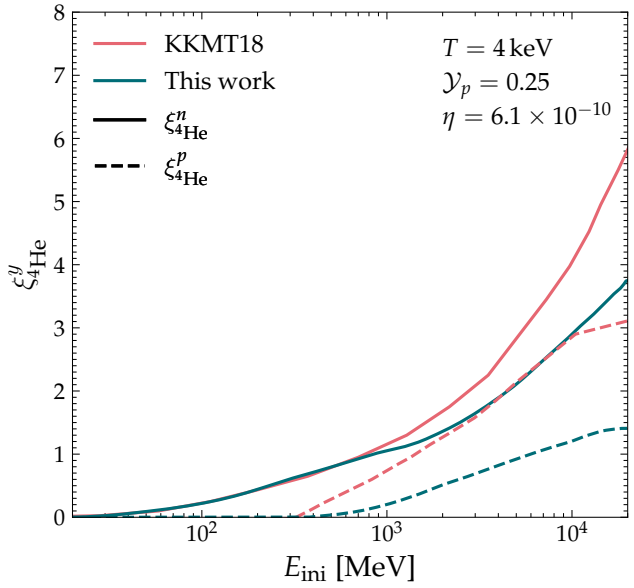
III. Calculate nuclear scattering and determine final products

IV. Repeat until all particles in the cascade have negligible kinetic energy

BrandNew

Hadrodisintegration in ACROPOLIS

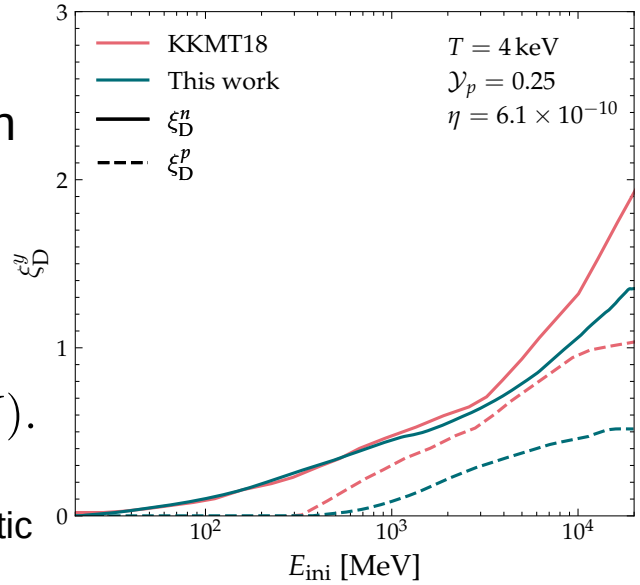
Also check out https://github.com/hep-mh/xena



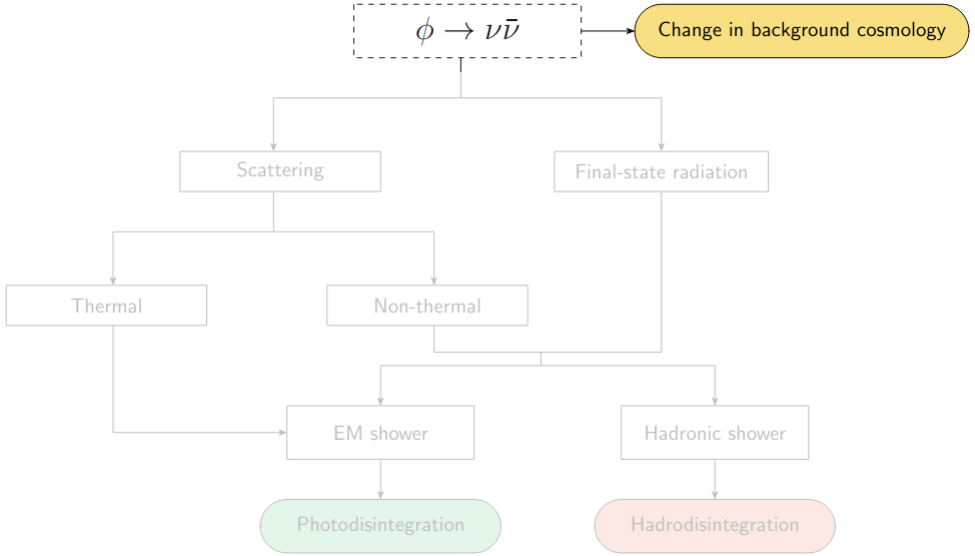
Number of nuclei produced per injected nucleon

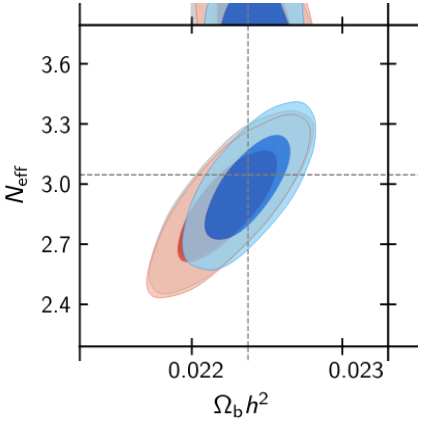
$$\left[\frac{\mathrm{d}n_X}{\mathrm{d}t}\right]_{\mathrm{hadro}} = \sum_{y=n,p} \int_0^\infty \mathrm{d}K\, \xi^y_X[n_j](K) \frac{\mathrm{d}^2 n^{\mathrm{inj}}_y}{\mathrm{d}t\mathrm{d}K}(K).$$

Note: We approximate the injection spectrum as monoenergetic



Handling the contributions step-by-step





The dominant effect:

Additional energy density increases $N_{\rm eff}$

↓

Change in η due to correlation with $N_{\rm eff}$

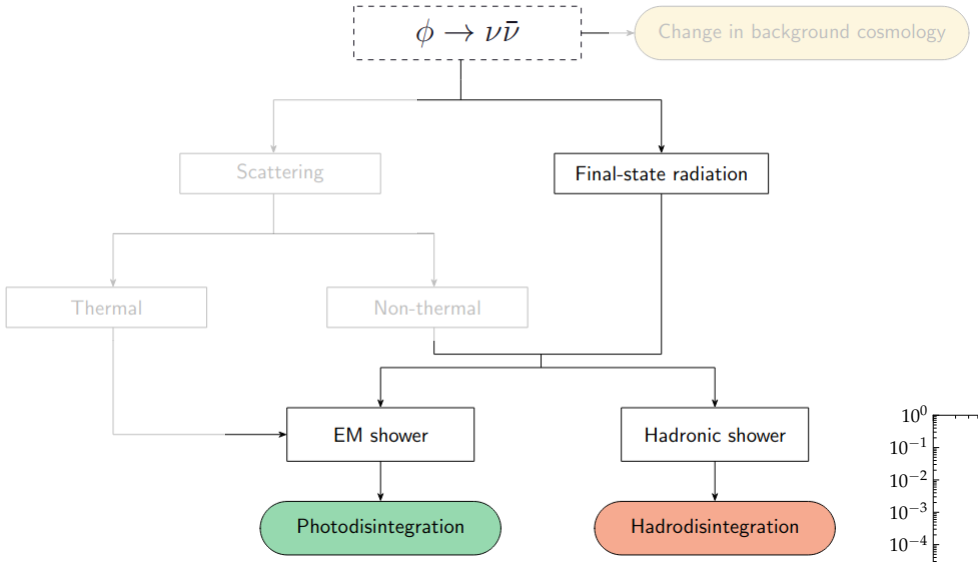
↓

Initial conditions of BBN are varied due to η

↓

BBN is modified and we get different abundances

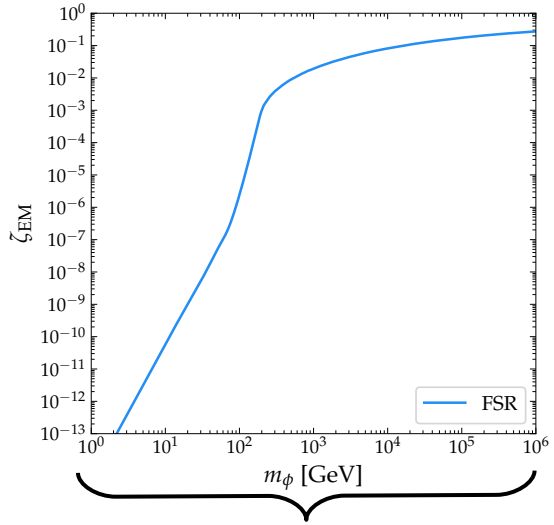
Handling the contributions step-by-step

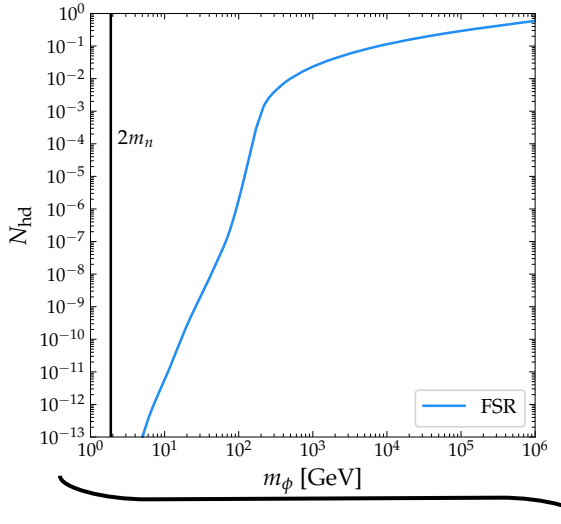


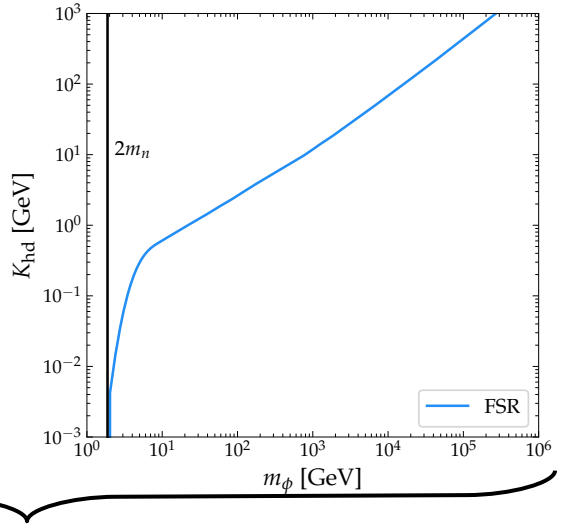
Injection rate is determined by the decay rate

Effect of an individual injection determined by PYTHIA

PDI handled in [2112.09137]:



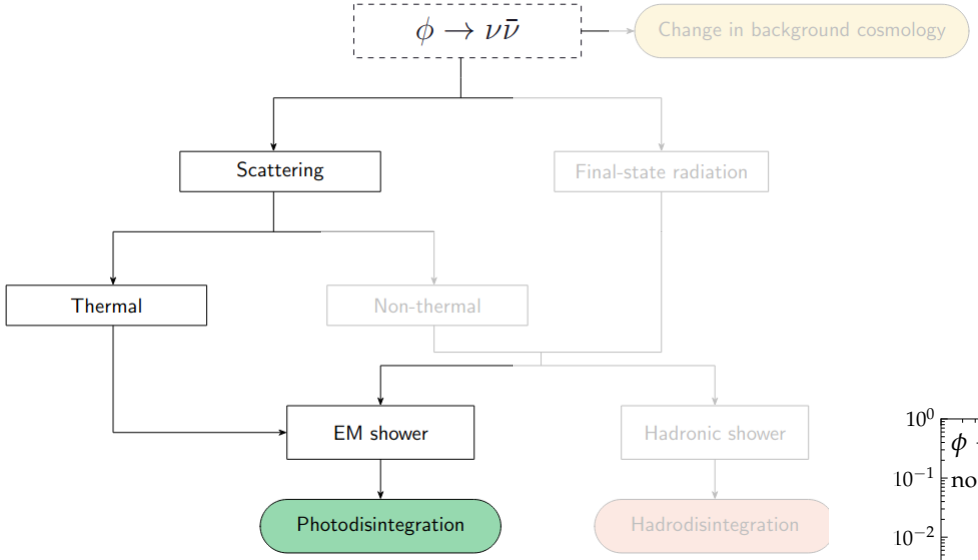




PDI requires 1 parameter (universal spectrum)

HDI requires 2 parameters

Handling the contributions step-by-step



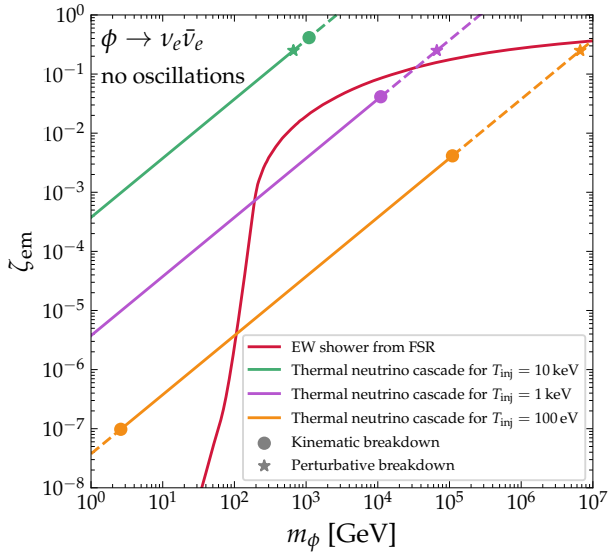
Injection rate given by thermal scattering rate

$$\Gamma_{ee}(T, E) \sim G_F^2 E T_\nu^4$$

Effect of an individual injection determined analytically

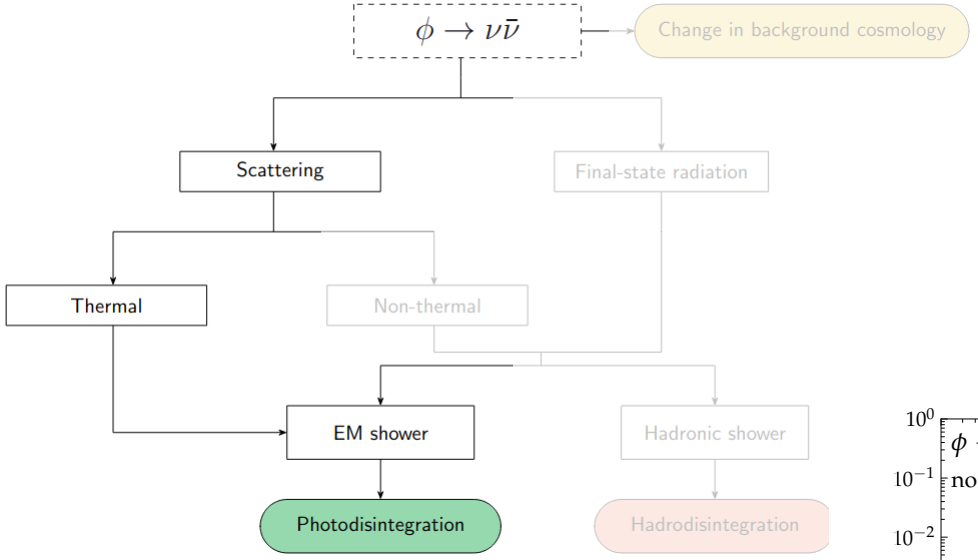
$$\mathrm{d}\zeta_{\mathrm{em}} \simeq \frac{E(t)}{E_{\mathrm{inj}}} \Gamma_{ee}(t) \mathrm{d}t$$

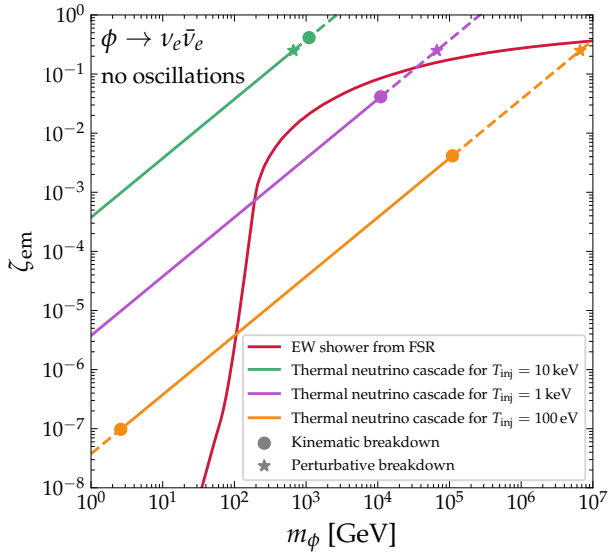
$$\Rightarrow \quad \zeta_{\mathrm{em}}(T_{\mathrm{inj}}) = \frac{1}{4} \left(\frac{\Gamma_{ee}}{H} \right)_{\mathrm{inj}}$$



$$s \sim 4ET \ll 4m_n^2$$

Handling the contributions step-by-step





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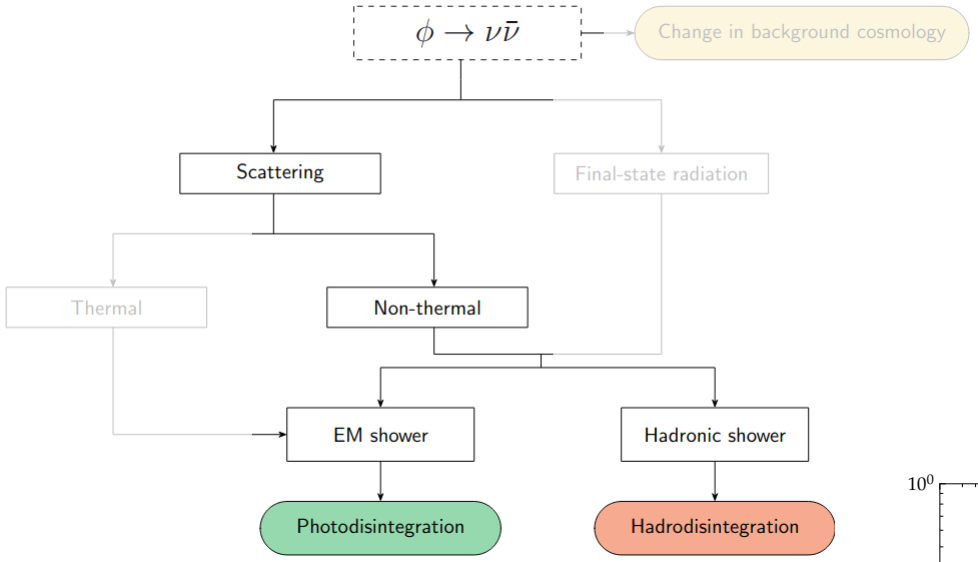
$$\Rightarrow \quad \zeta_{\rm em}(T_{\rm inj}) = \frac{1}{4}\left(\frac{\Gamma_{ee}}{H}\right)_{\rm inj}$$

"Elastic" scattering:

$$\Gamma_{ee}(T, E_1) + \Gamma_{ee}(T, E_2)$$
$$= \text{const.} \times G_F^2 T_\nu^4 \, (E_1 + E_2)$$
$$= \Gamma_{ee}(T, E_1 + E_2)$$

Redistribution of energy is irrelevant!

Handling the contributions step-by-step

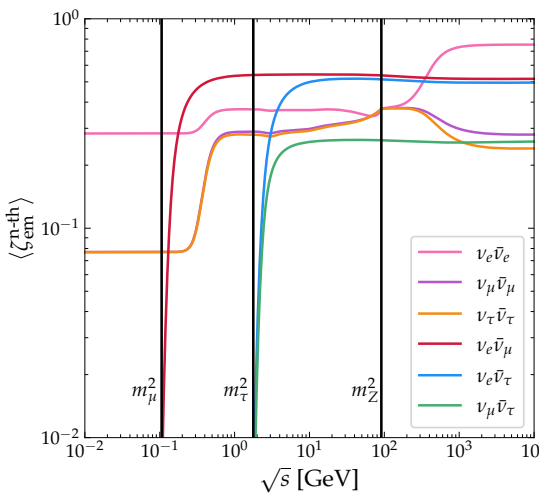


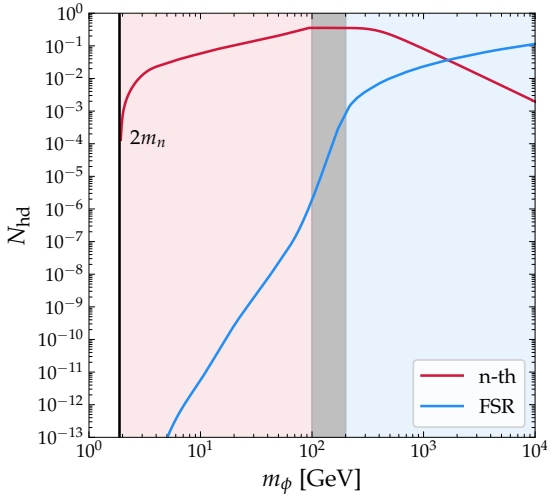
Injection rate given in general by

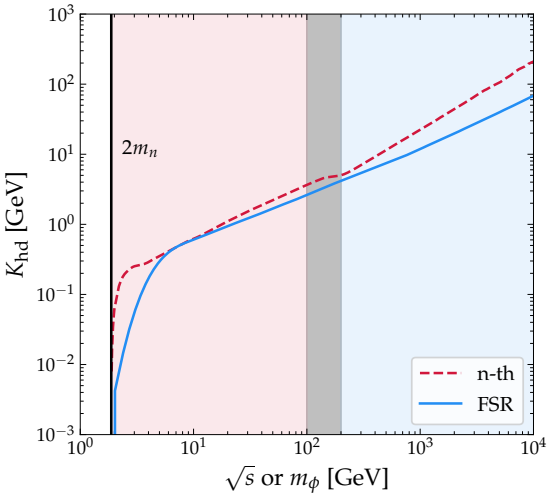
$$\Gamma_{\rm ann}(T,E) = \frac{g_\nu}{16\pi^2 E^2}\int_0^\infty {\rm d}\epsilon\, f_{\nu,\text{n-th}}(\epsilon)\int_0^{4E\epsilon} {\rm d}s\; s\cdot\sigma_{\rm ann}(s)$$

Requires knowledge of non-thermal spectrum!!!
See following slides for exact methodology

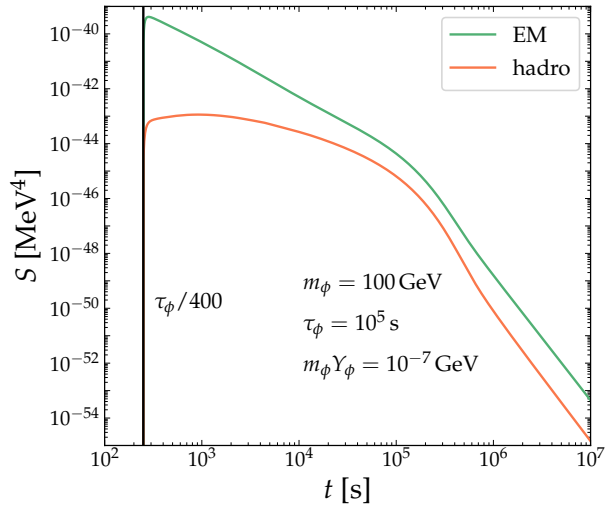
Effects of individual event determined by PYTHIA

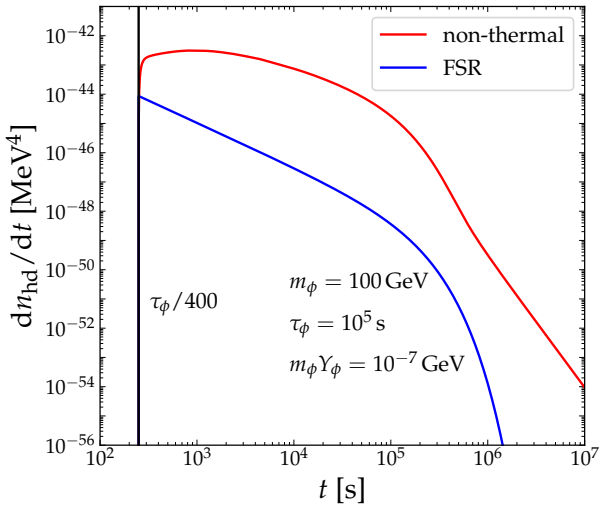


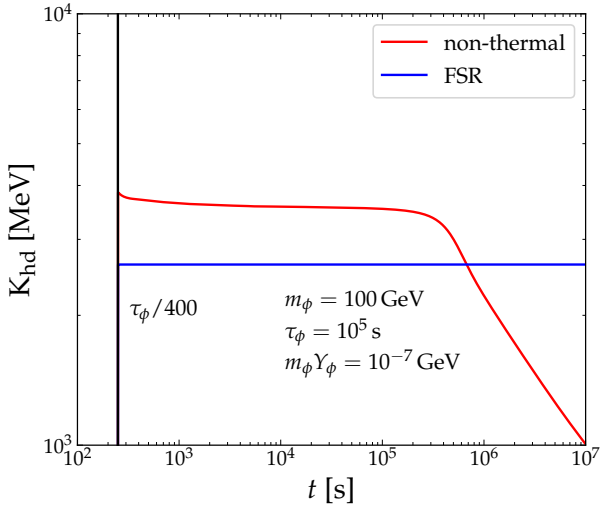


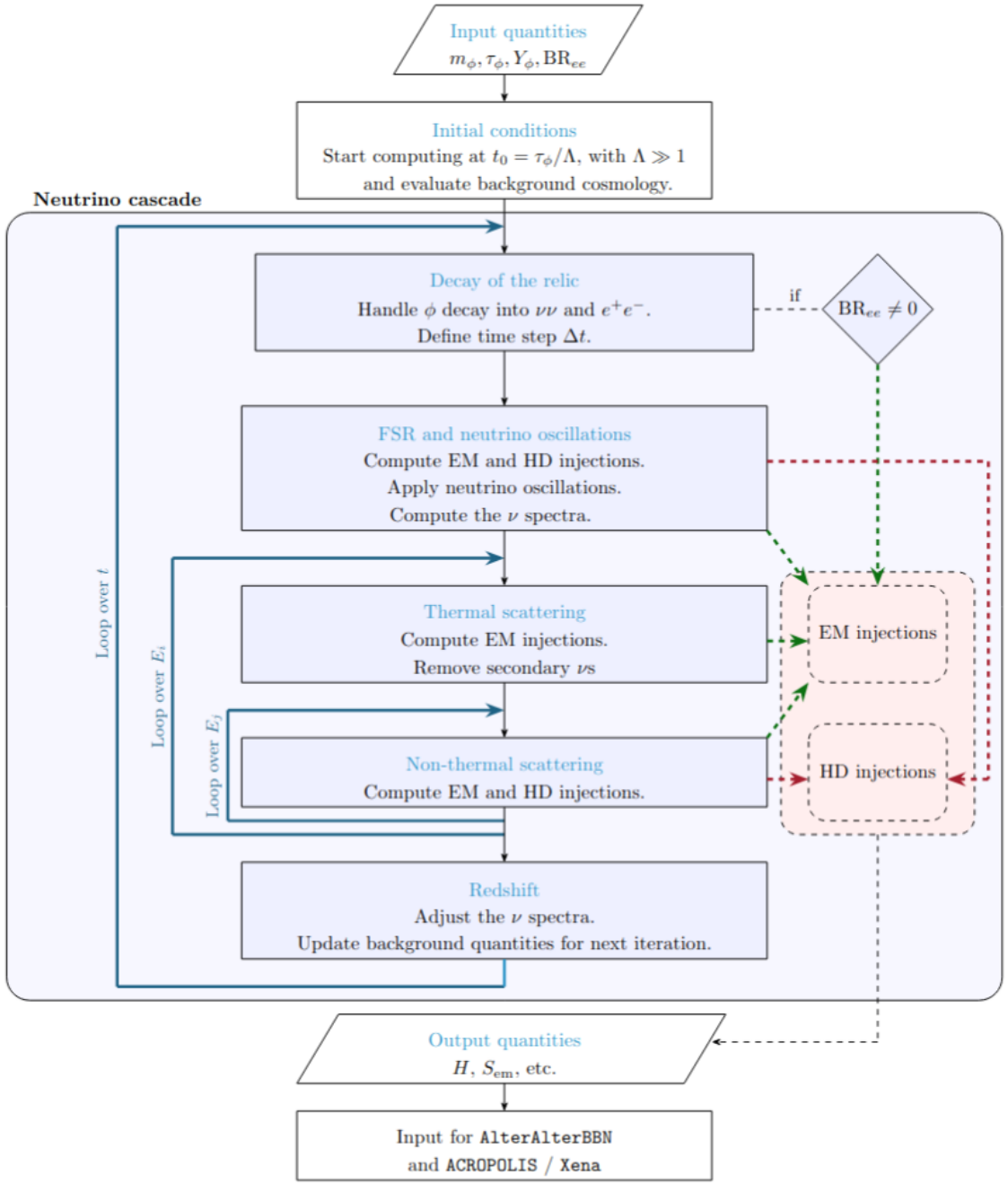


How to track the neutrino cascade



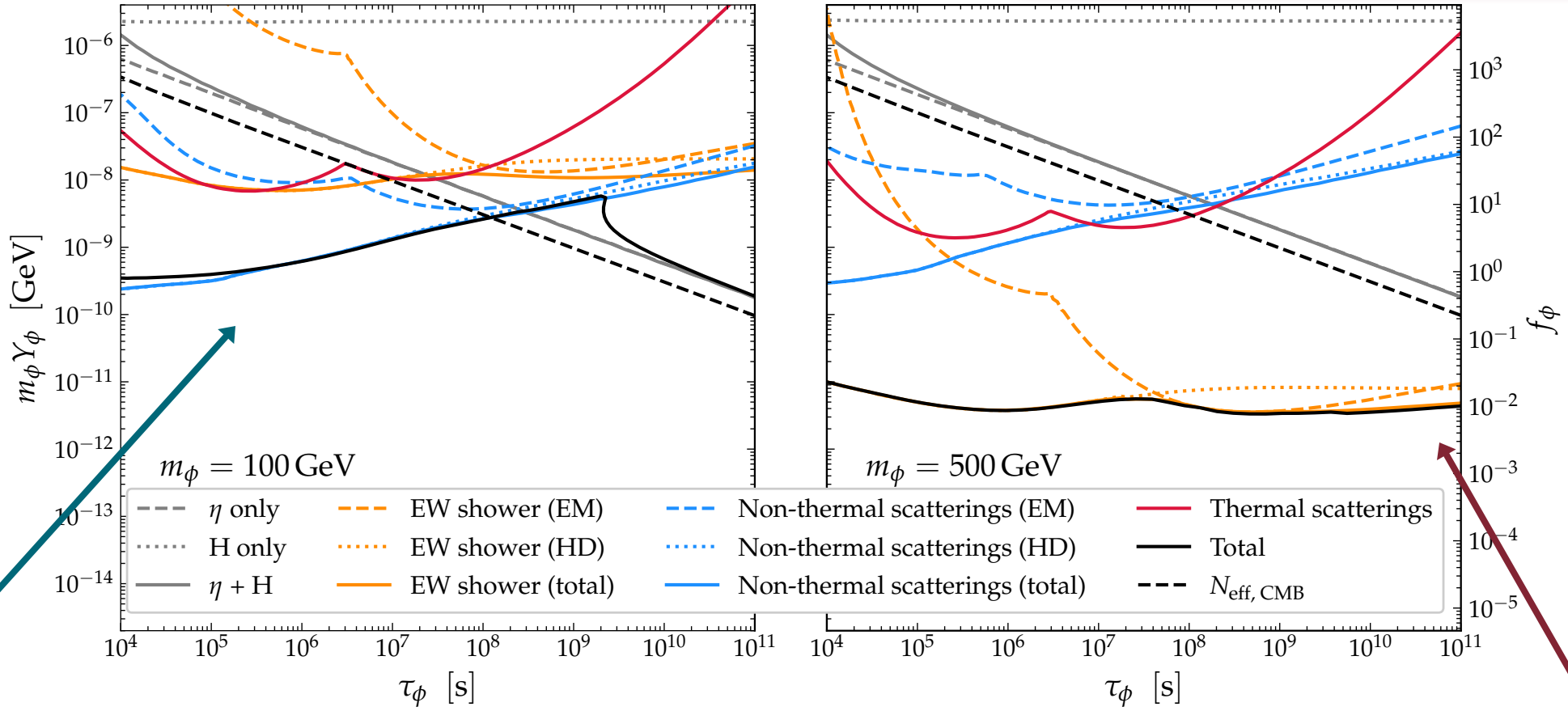






Detailed discussion of the resulting constraints

We observe both synergy effects and cancelations!



Below the EW scale:
Domination of non-thermal scattering (light) and indirect effects (heavy)

Above the EW scale:
Complete domination of EW shower from FSR

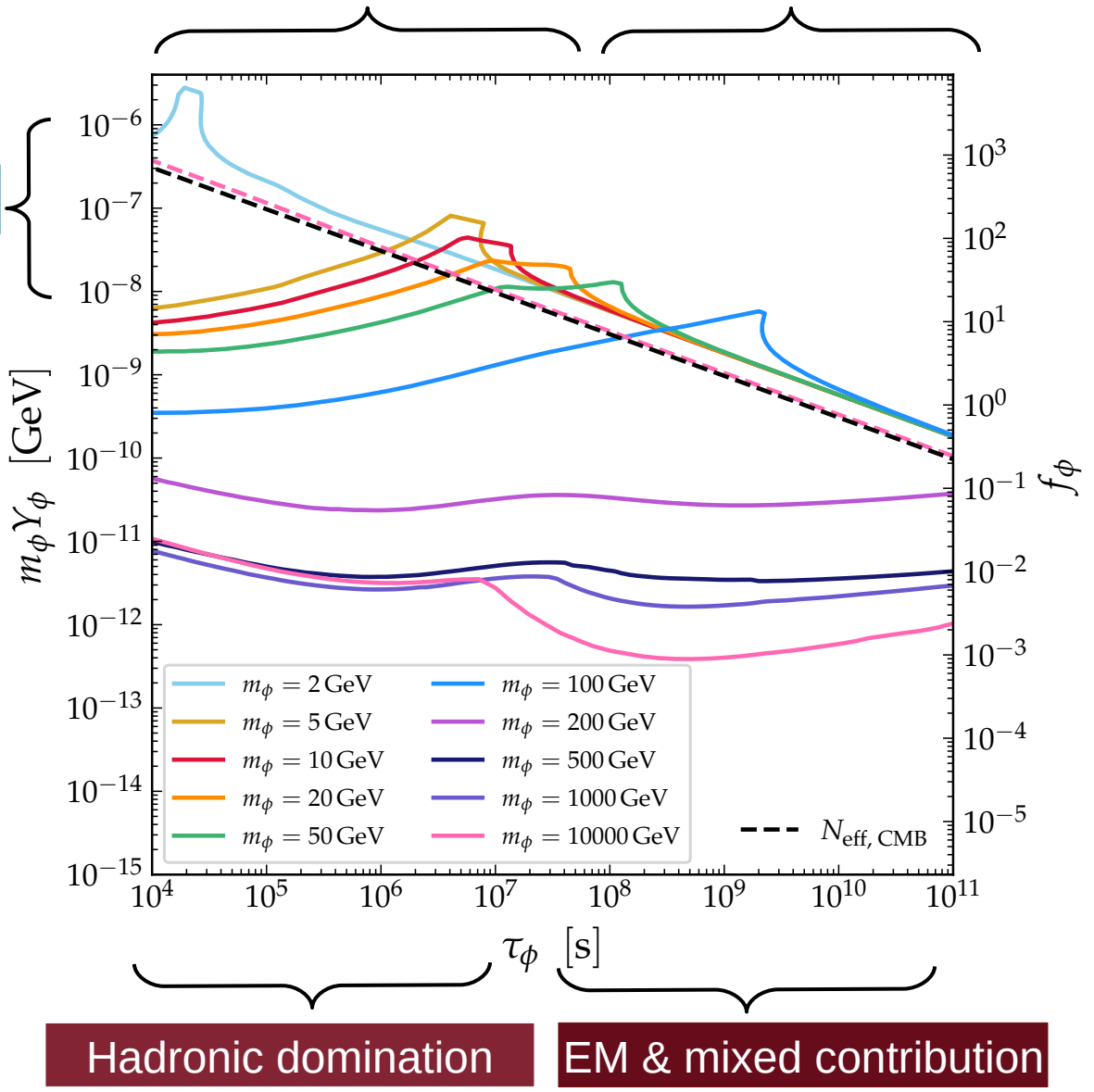
Scanning the full parameter space

Jump across nucleon mass threshold

Unlocking of Z resonance

Dominance of FSR begins

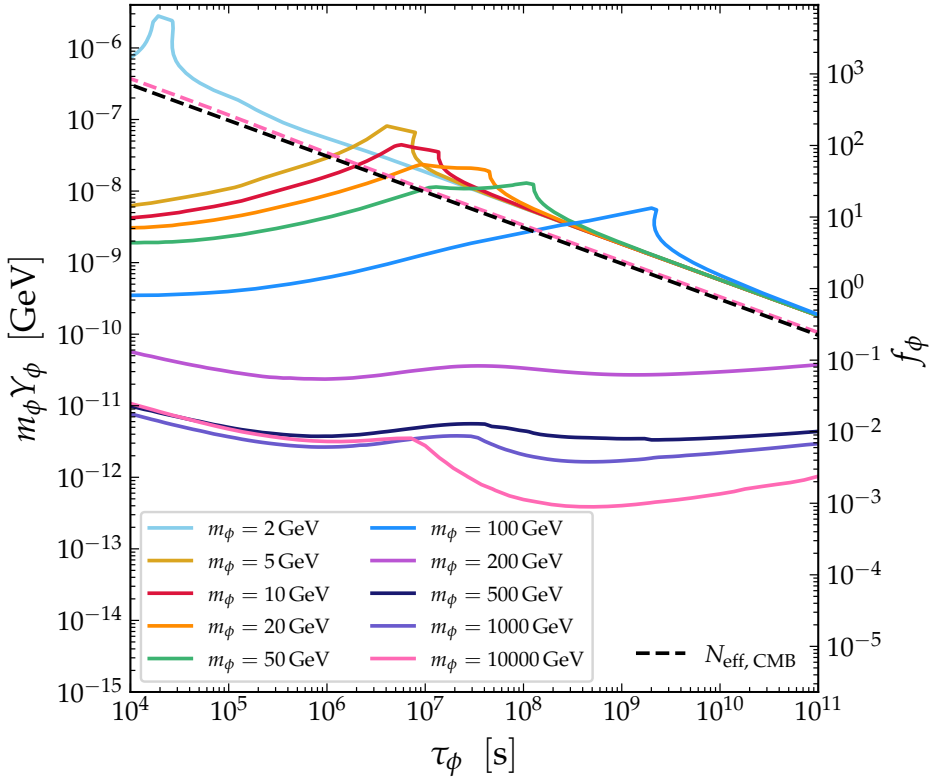
All 4 effects play an important role in some part of the parameter space, however the thermal scattering only due to the depletion of the spectrum.



Conclusions & Outlook

- Thorough study of neutrino injections after BBN
- Surprisingly strong limits, especially from hadrons
- Combination of improved literature results and new methods
- Breakdown of many assumptions for low lifetimes requires more care (stay tuned!)
- This work is part of an upcoming review to summarise the contributions of Marco and Frederik to the field

… and of course check the paper for (many) more details.



Conclusions & Outlook

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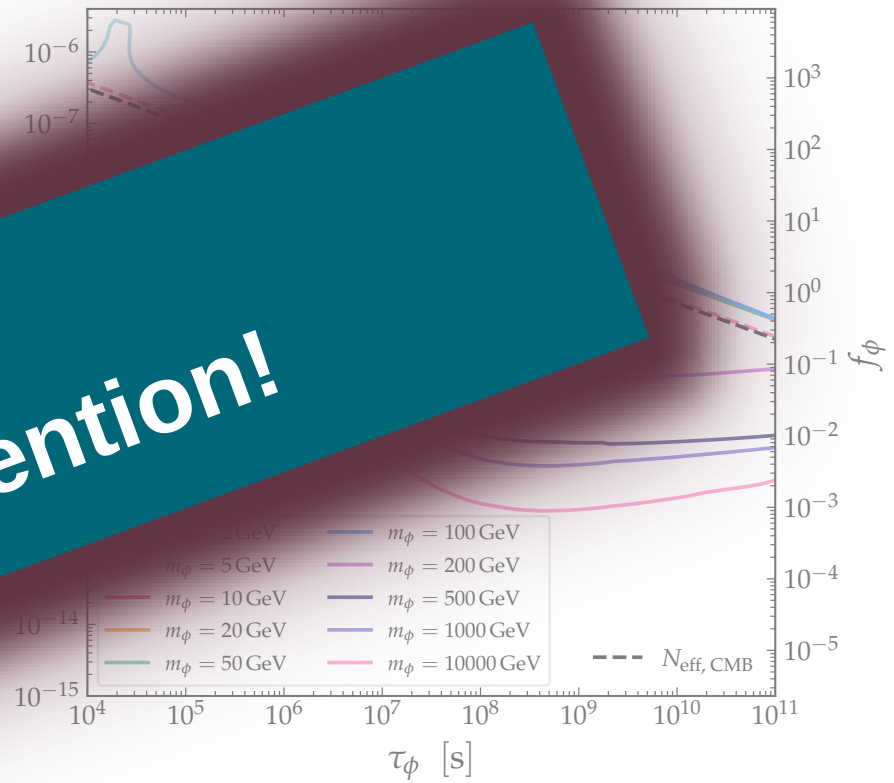
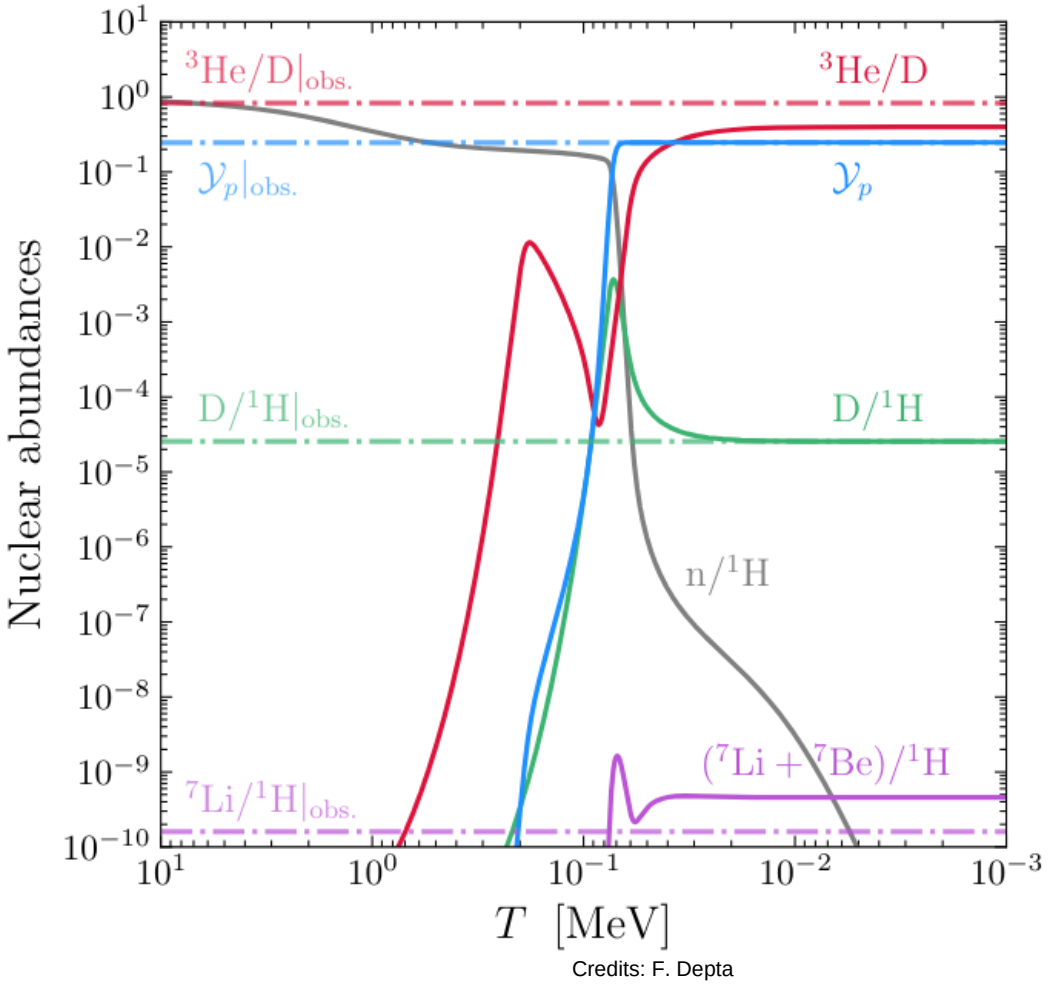
That's it!
Thank you for your attention!



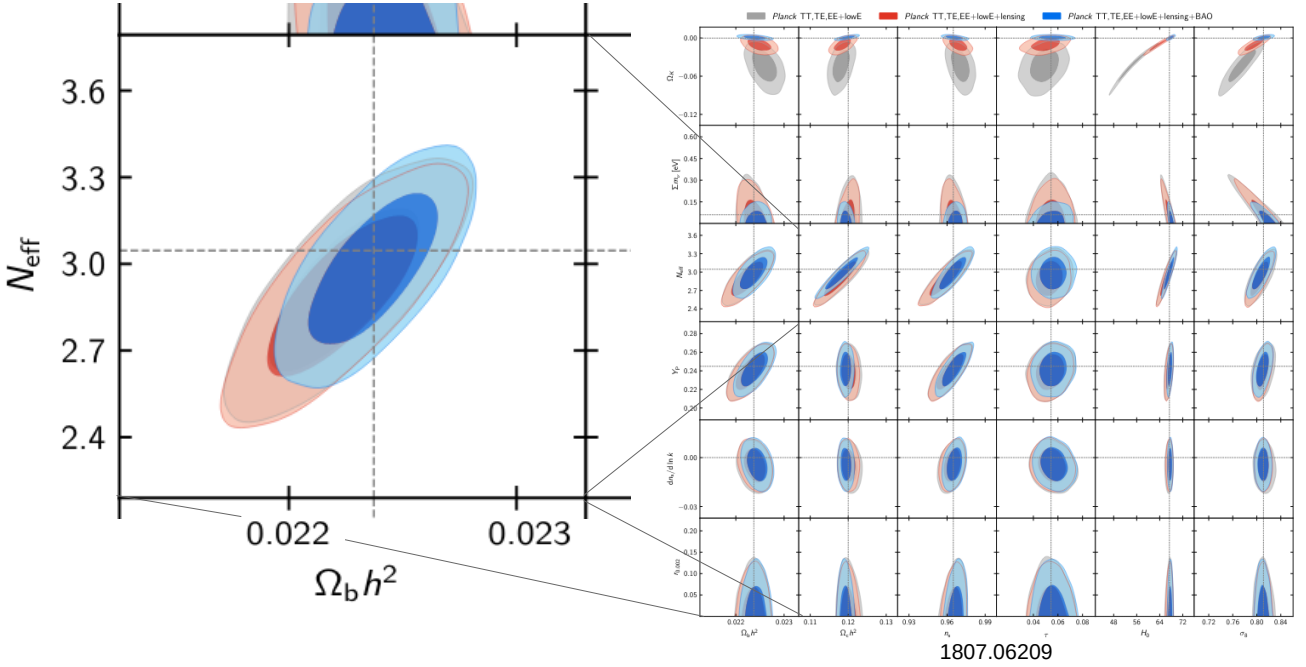
Back-up

Interlude: BBN data, photodisintegration & hadrodisintegration

$$N_{\rm eff} = \frac{\rho_\nu^{\rm th}(t_{\rm rec}) + \rho_\nu^{\rm n\text{-}th}(t_{\rm rec})}{2\frac{7}{8}\frac{\pi^2}{30}\left(\frac{4}{11}\right)^{4/3} T(t_{\rm rec})^4} \equiv [3 + \Delta(t_{\rm rec})] \left(\frac{11}{4}\right)^{4/3} \left(\frac{T_\nu(t_{\rm rec})}{T(t_{\rm rec})}\right)^4 .$$



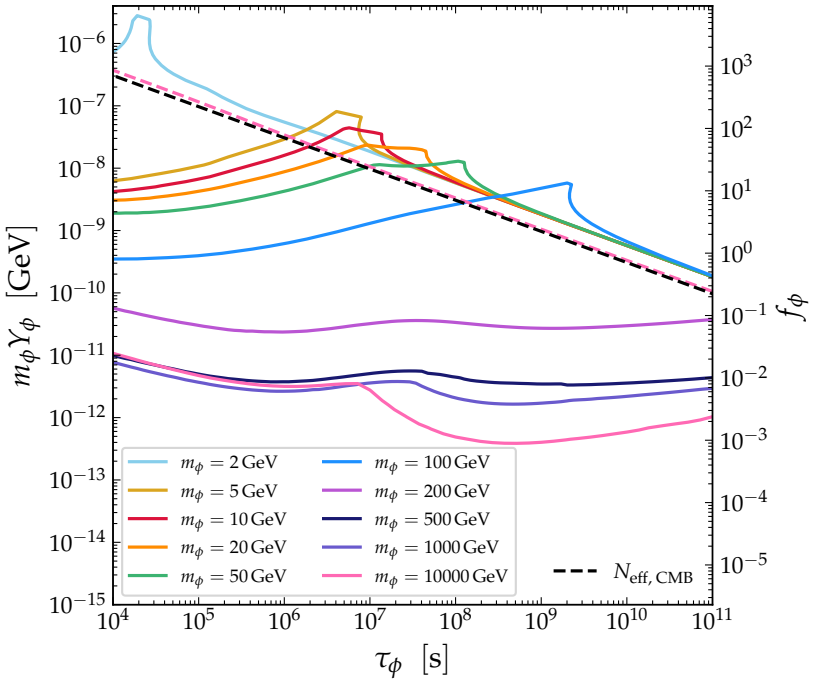
Credits: F. Depta



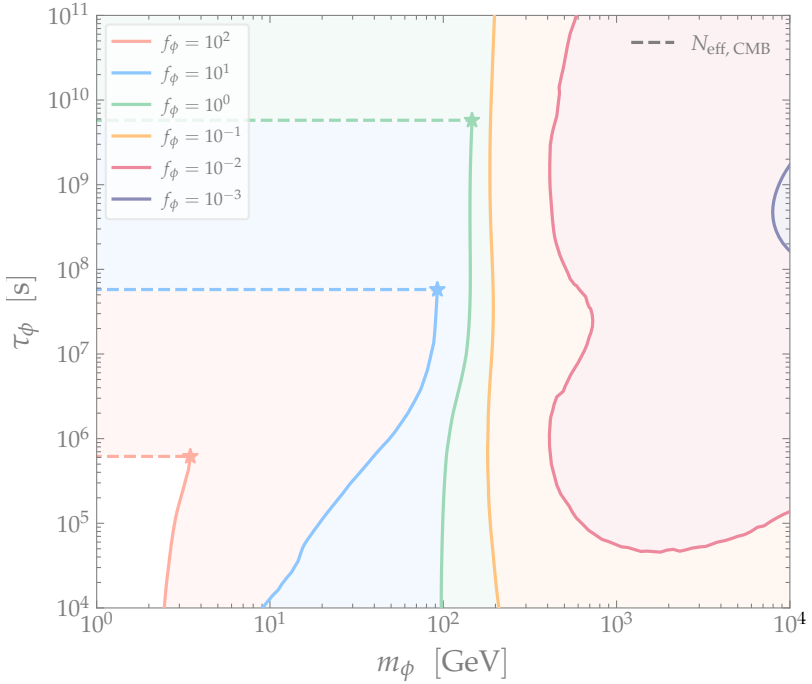
$$\Rightarrow \eta = \overline{\eta} + r\sigma_\eta \frac{N_{\rm eff} - \overline{N}_{\rm eff}}{\sigma_{N_{\rm eff}}},$$

All three parameter planes

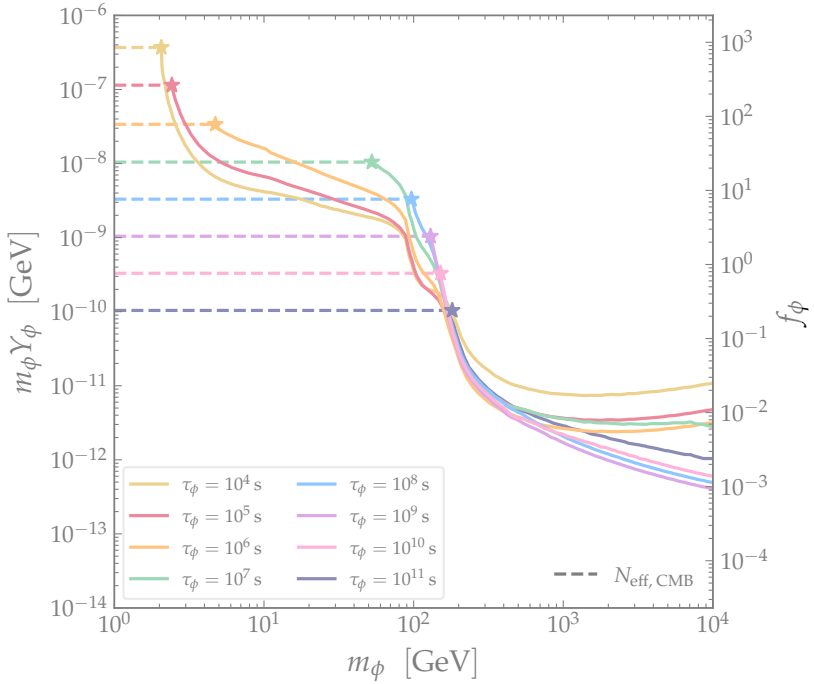
m_ϕ



f_ϕ

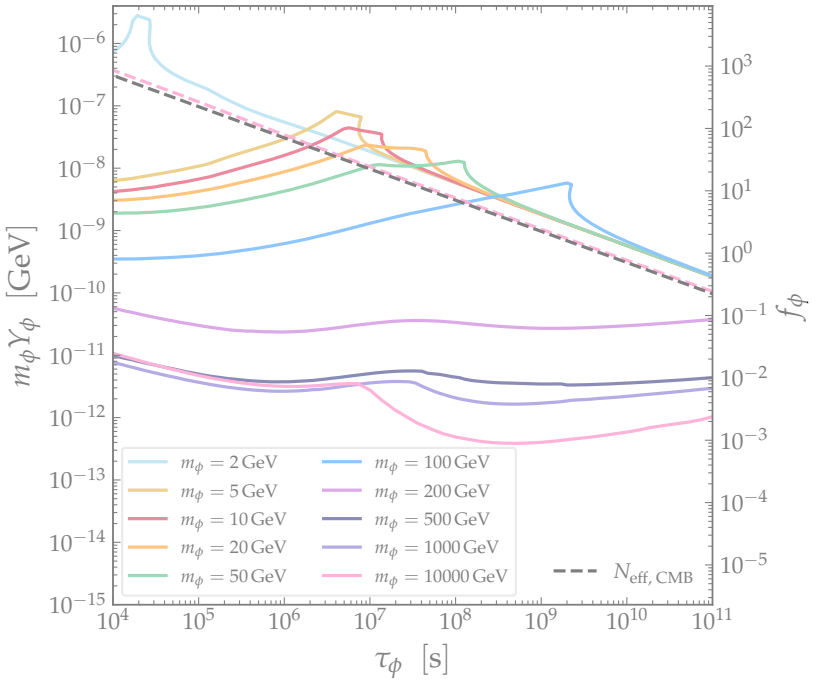


τ_ϕ

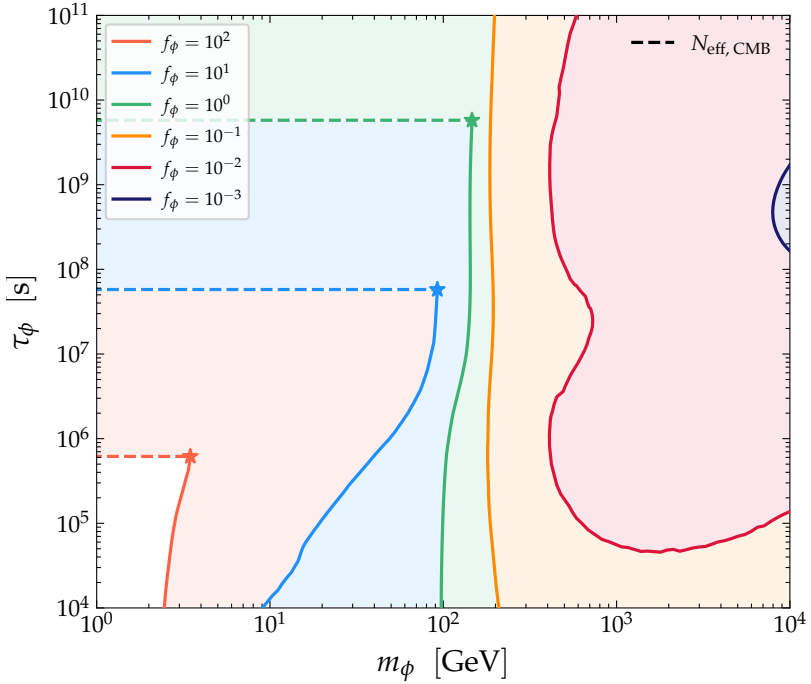


All three parameter planes

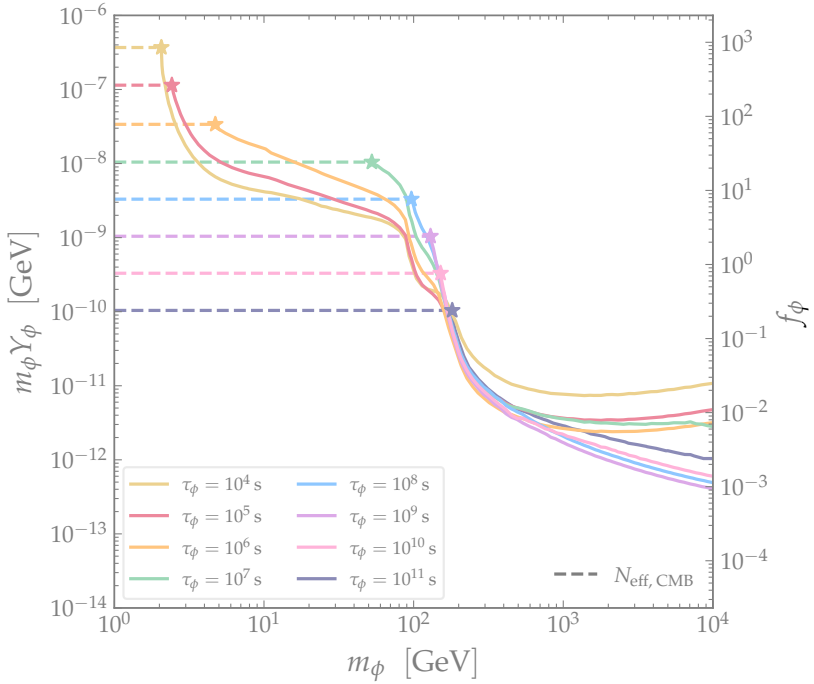
m_ϕ



f_ϕ

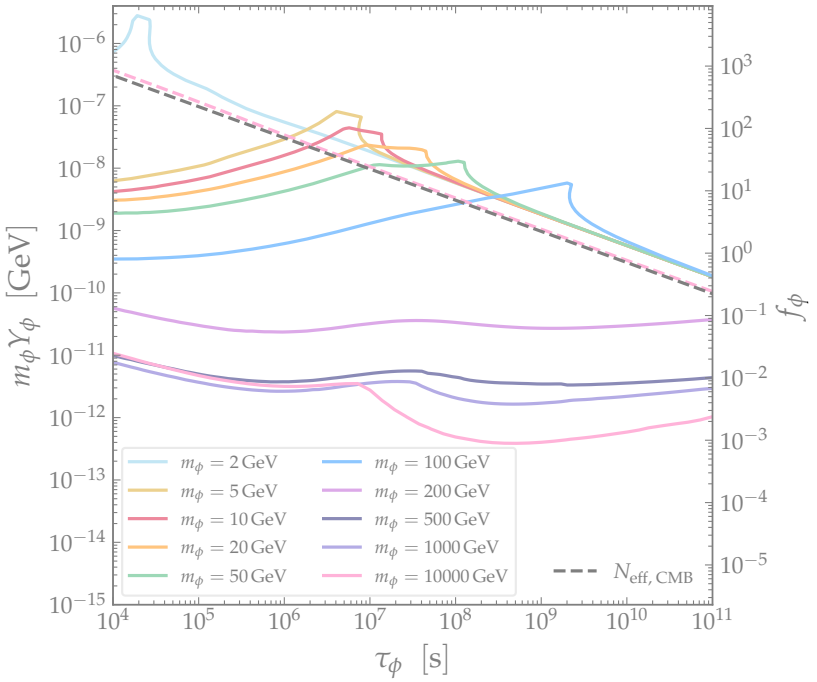


τ_ϕ

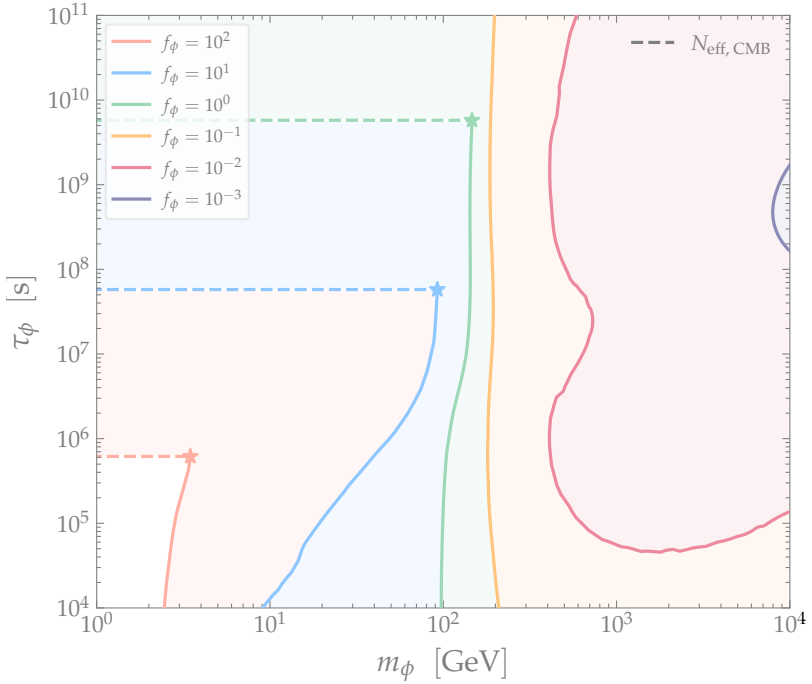


All three parameter planes

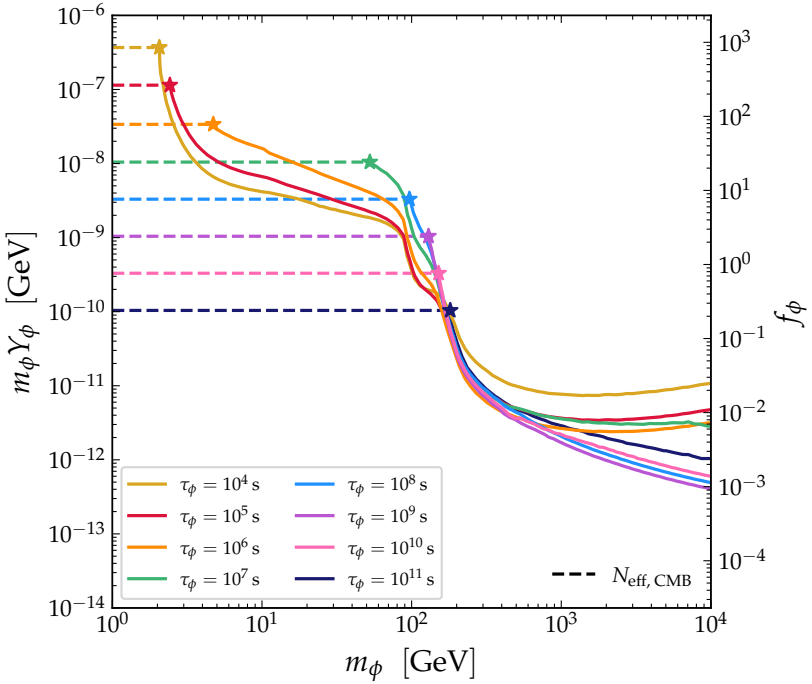
m_ϕ



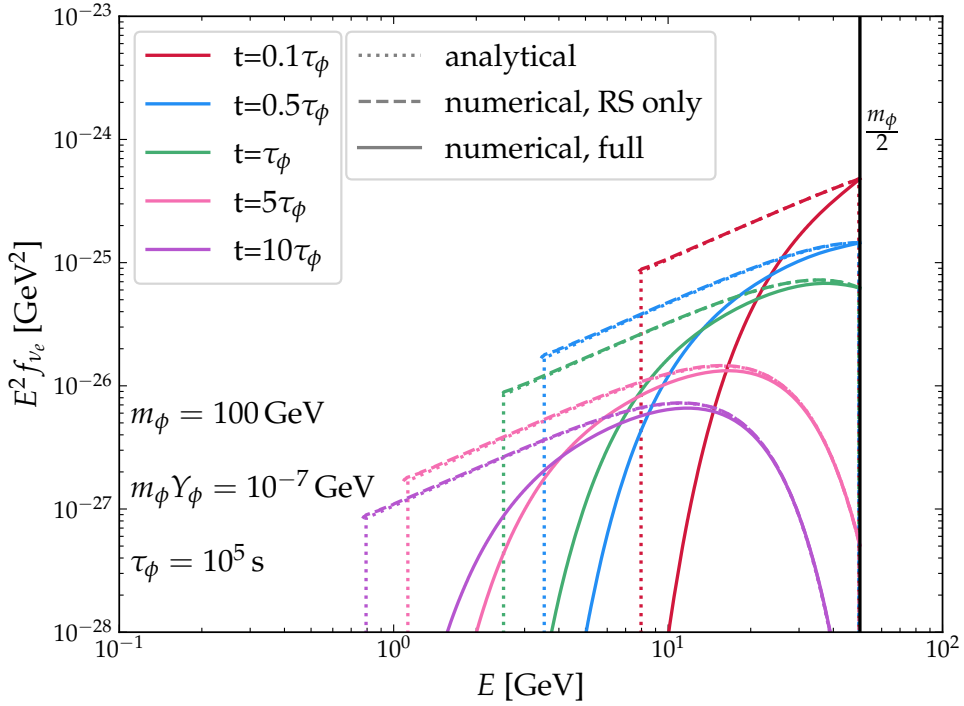
f_ϕ



τ_ϕ



How to track the neutrino cascade



Is the Hubble rate dominant

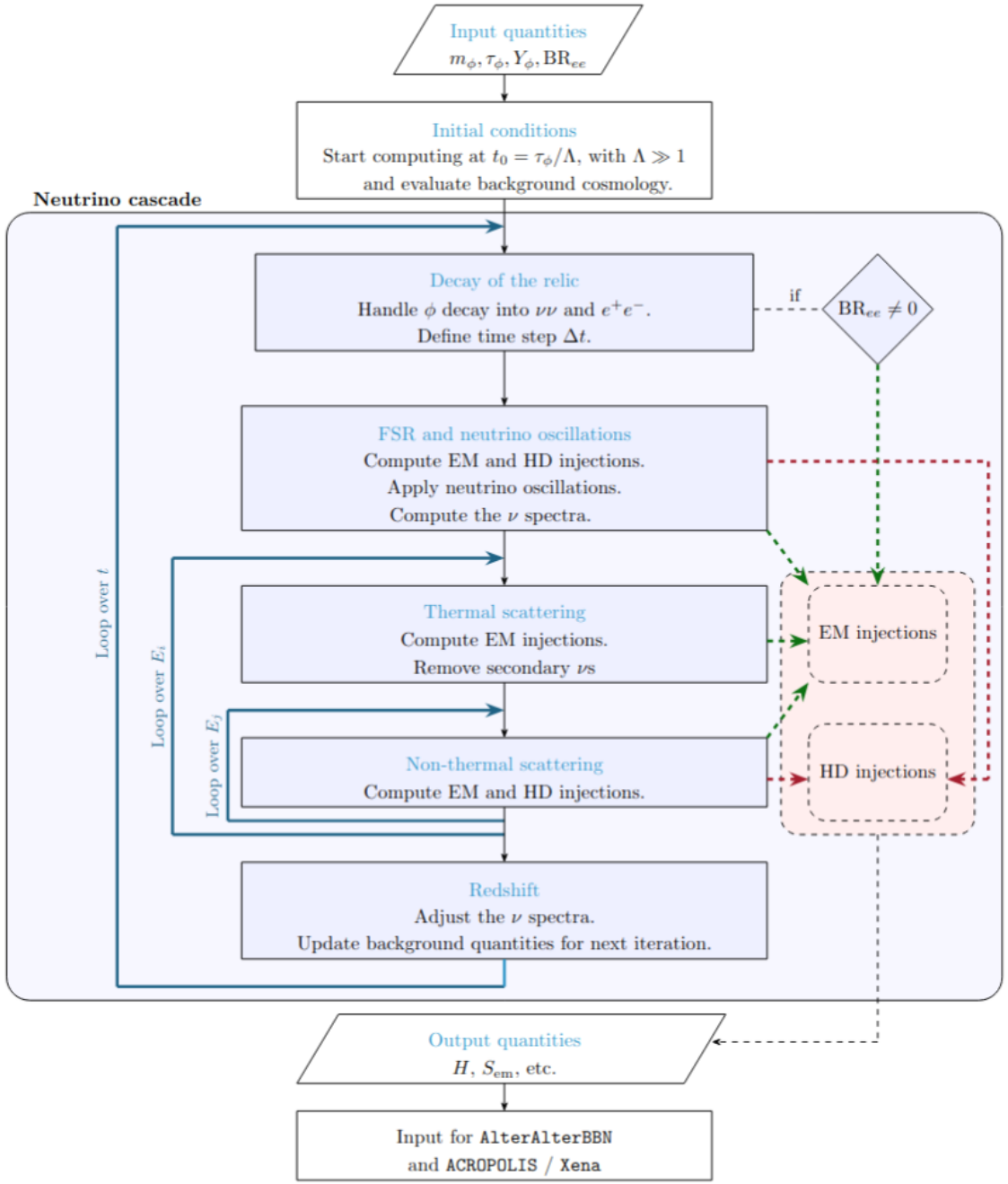
Yes

Spectrum mainly redshifts

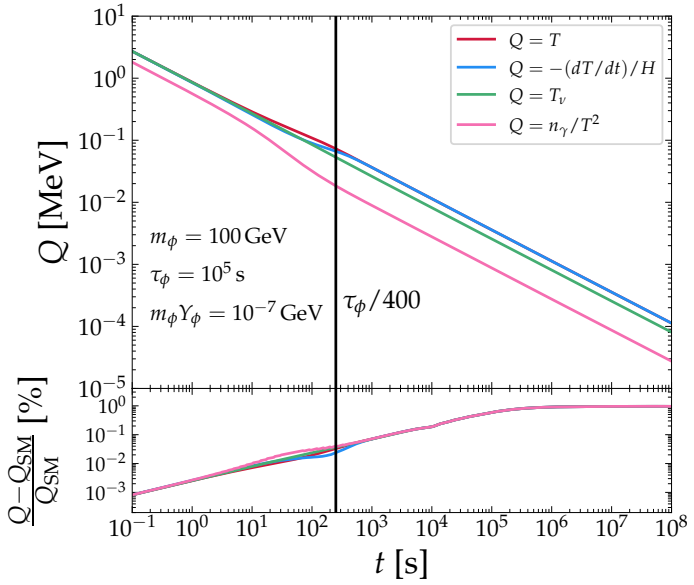
No

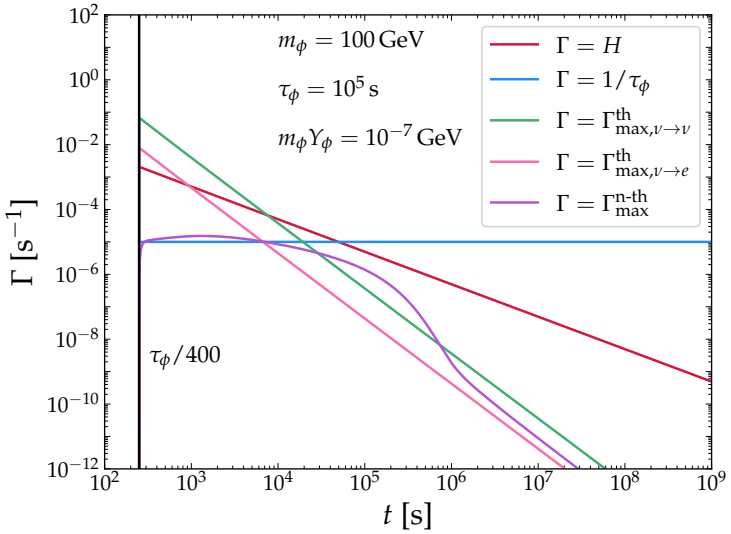
Elastic scattering depletes the spectrum

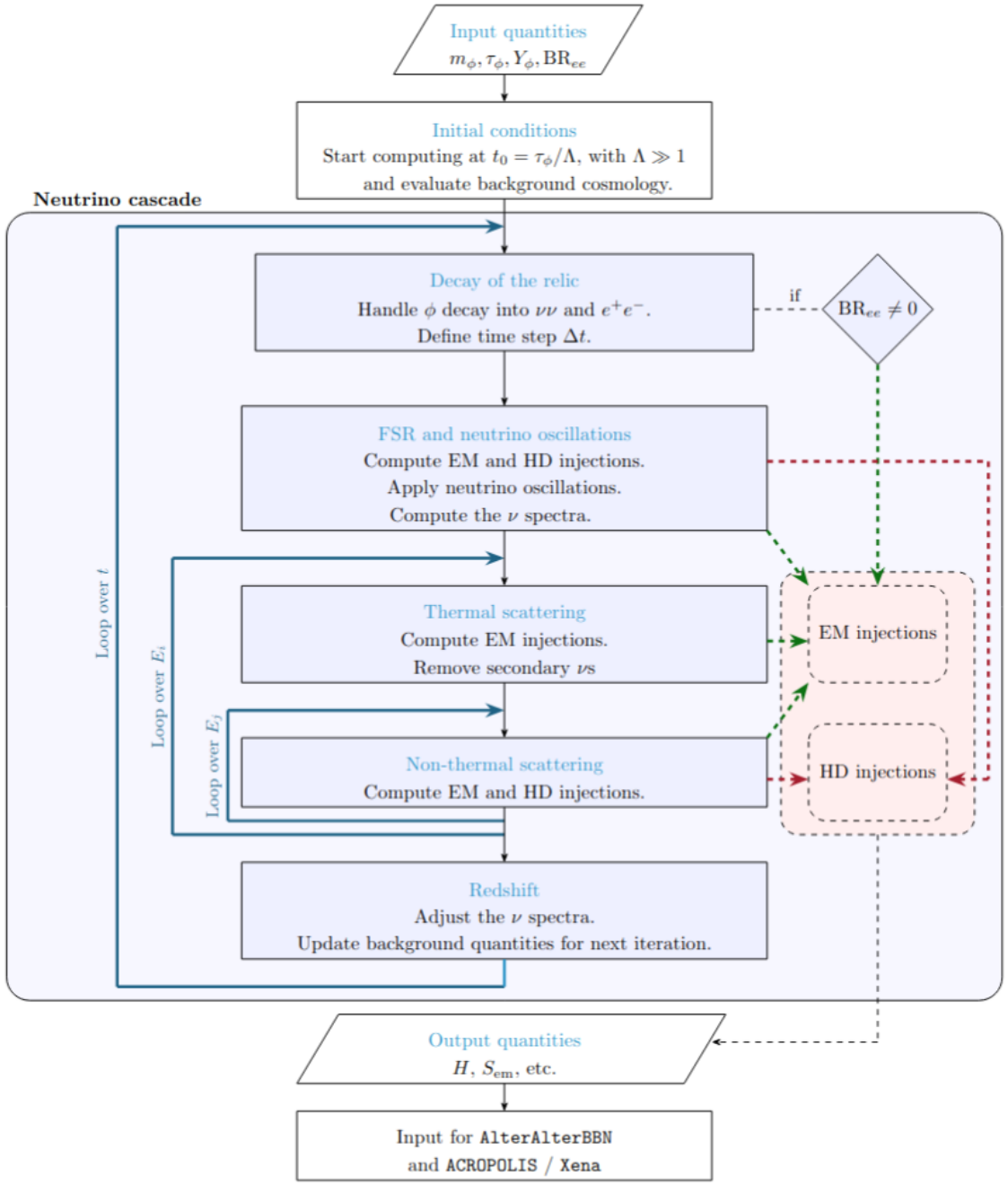
Approximation: No redistribution of energy



How to track the neutrino cascade

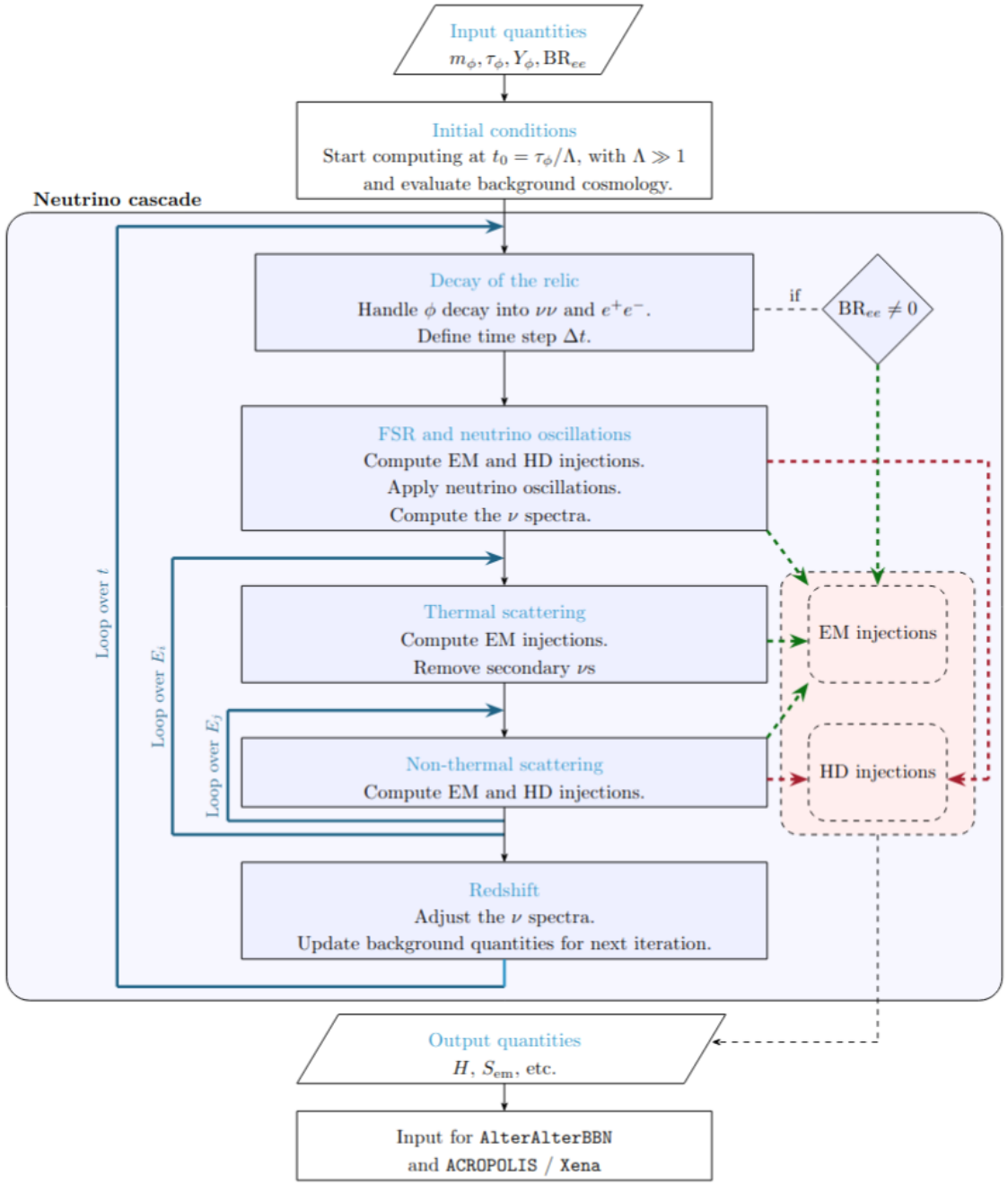




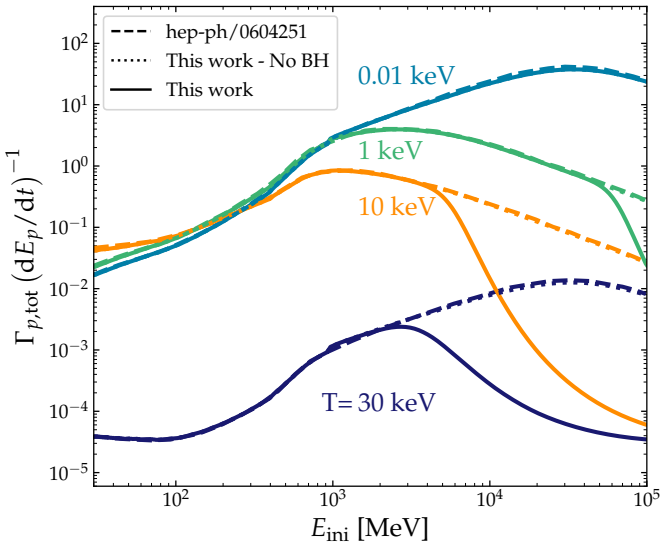


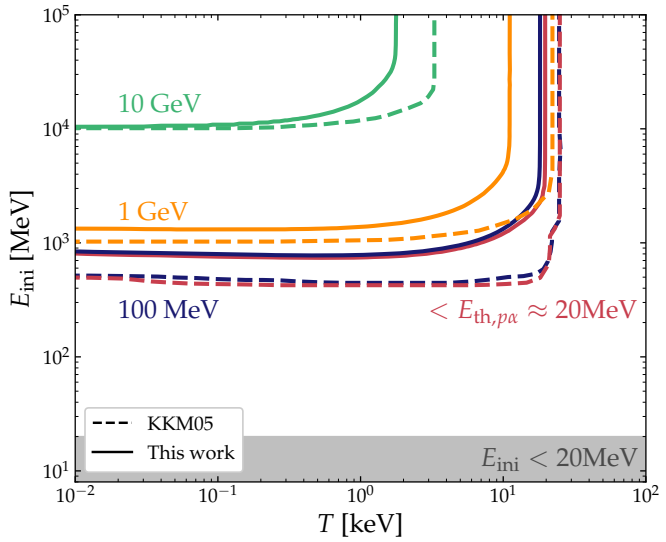
How to track the neutrino cascade

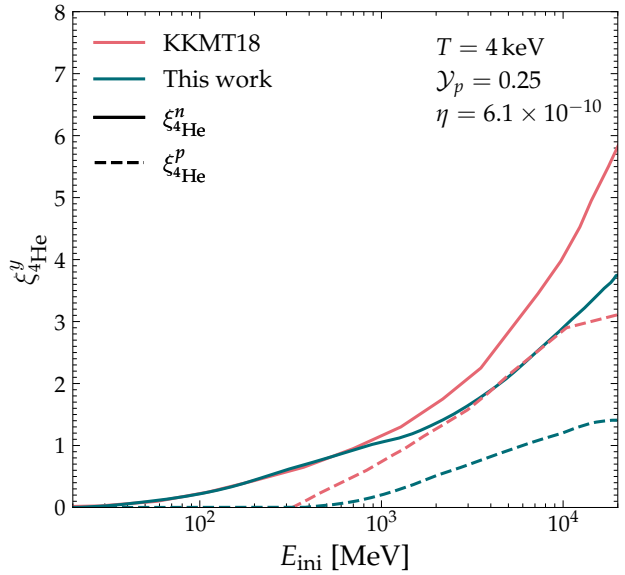
Variable	Description	Unit
	Input parameters	
Y_ϕ	Abundance of ϕ	-
m_ϕ	Mass of ϕ	MeV
τ_ϕ	Lifetime of ϕ	s
BR_{ee}	Branching ratio into e^+e^-	-
	One-dimensional output parameters	
f_ϕ	Fractional abundance of ϕ, $\frac{\Omega_\phi}{\Omega_{\mathrm{DM}}}$	-
N_{eff}	Effective number of neutrinos	-
η	Baryon-to-photon ratio	-
	Two-dimensional output parameters	
t	Time	s
T	Temperature	MeV
$\frac{\mathrm{d}T}{\mathrm{d}t}$	Time-temperature relation	MeV^2
T_ν	Neutrino temperature	MeV
H	Hubble rate	MeV
n_γ	Photon number density	MeV^3
S_{em}	Electromagnetic source term, eq. (4.11)	MeV^4
S_{hd}	Hadronic source term	MeV^4
$\frac{\mathrm{d}n_{\mathrm{hd}}^{\text{n-th}}}{\mathrm{d}t}$	Injected hadrons per time from non-th. scattering, eq. (4.14)	MeV^4
$K_{\mathrm{hd}}^{\text{n-th}}$	Avg. kinetic energy of hadrons from non-th. scattering, eq. (4.14)	MeV
$\frac{\mathrm{d}n_{\mathrm{hd}}^{\mathrm{fsr}}}{\mathrm{d}t}$	Injected hadrons per time interval from FSR, eq. (4.14)	MeV^4
$K_{\mathrm{hd}}^{\mathrm{fsr}}$	Avg. kinetic energy of hadrons from FSR, eq. (4.14)	MeV

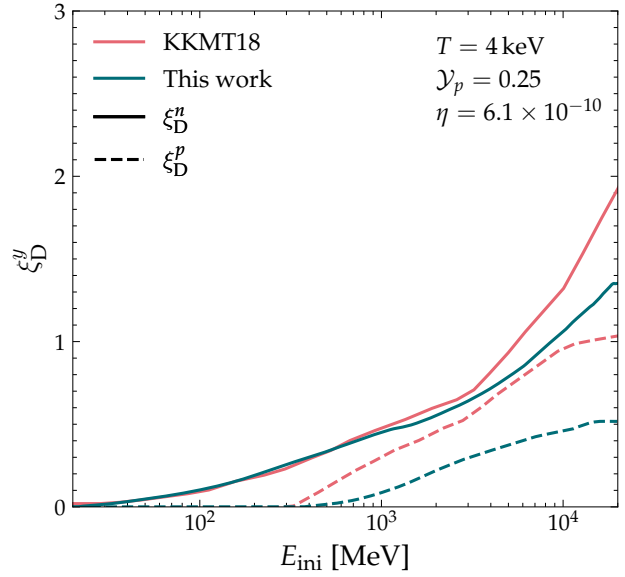


Details on hadrodisintegration

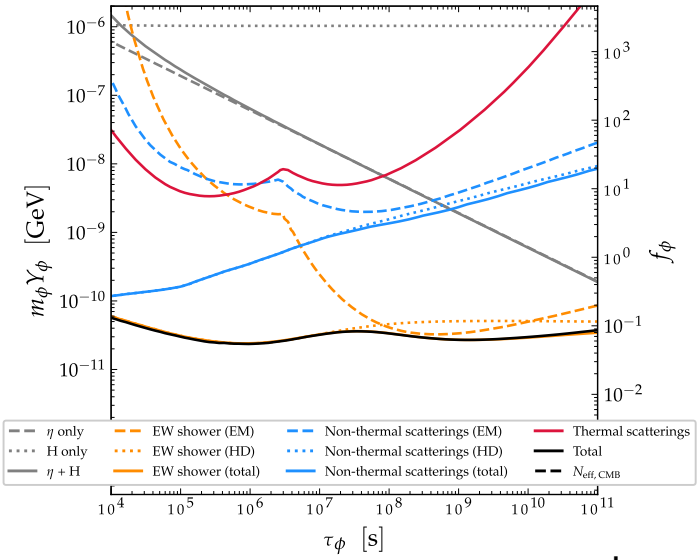




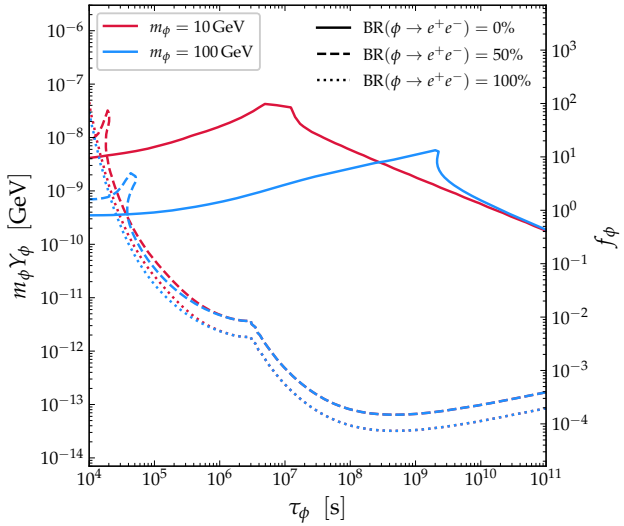




Supplementary result plots

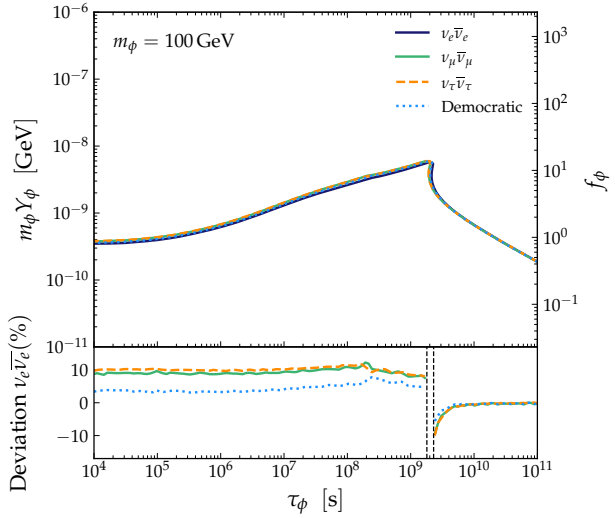


200 GeV

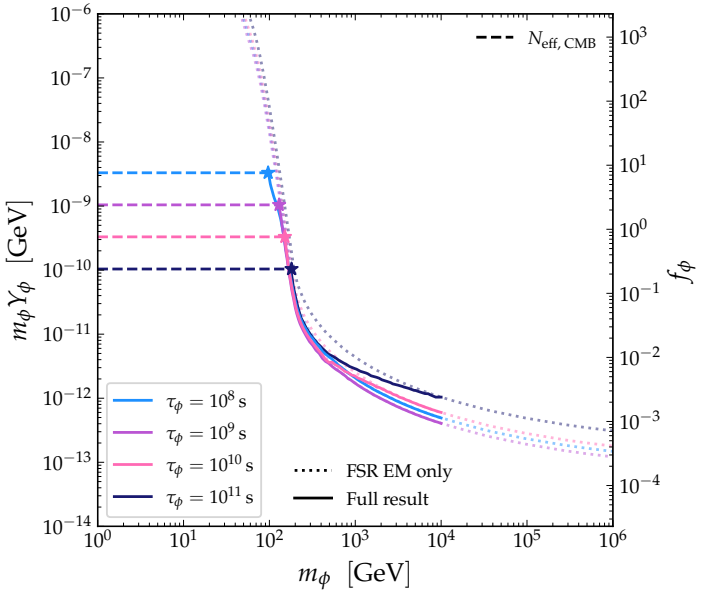


Immediate effect of EM injection

Impact of different flavors



Asymptotic behaviour



Model building

$$y_N \phi \overline{N^c} N$$

- Majoron: with loop suppressed decay into electrons
- Gauge boson coupled to two sterile neutrinos + seesaw mixing
- Neutral component of a scalar hypercharge 2 triplet → $\Delta = (\delta^0, \delta^+, \delta^{++})$
- Decay into one neutrino and one DS state is potentially also relevant → $\Delta L L$

The full EW cross sections