The mechanical properties of phase separated protein droplets
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To gain a deeper understanding of these aspects, we study a few such proteins in vitro. When these proteins are purified and added to a physiological buffer, they phase separate into droplets ranging in size from a few to tens of microns with liquid-like behavior similar to their physiological counterparts. By attaching small beads to the surface of the droplets, we can deform the droplets by manipulating the beads directly using optical tweezers. By measuring the force required to deform the droplets we determine their surface tension, elasticity and viscosity as well as the frequency response of these properties. We also measure these properties using passive micro-rheology.

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