

7.14 The energy of a CMBR photon is roughly (they are distributed with a black body distribution).

$$E_{\text{CMBR}} \simeq k_B T \simeq 2.3 \times 10^{-4} \text{ eV}.$$

Assume the other photon has energy E_γ .

In a "head on" collision:

$$\begin{array}{c} \text{mmmm} > < \text{~~~~~} \\ (\bar{E}_\gamma, E_\gamma, \infty) + (E_{\text{CMBR}}, -E_{\text{CMBR}}, \infty) \\ p_\gamma^\mu \quad p_{\text{CMBR}}^\mu \end{array}$$

=

$$e^+ : p_{e^+}^\mu$$

$$\begin{array}{c} e^- \\ p_{e^-}^\mu \end{array}$$


$$\text{So: } P_\gamma^\mu + P_{\text{CMBR}}^\mu = P_{e^-}^\mu + P_{e^+}^\mu$$

We can compare their squares in any ref. system since they are Lorentz invariant:

$$(E_\gamma + E_{\text{CMBR}})^2 - (\vec{E}_\gamma + \vec{E}_{\text{CMBR}})^2 = (2m_e)^2$$

$$4E_\gamma E_{\text{CMBR}} = 4m_e^2$$

$$\Rightarrow E_\gamma = \frac{m_e^2}{E_{\text{CMBR}}} = \frac{(0.511)^2 \text{ MeV}^2}{2.4 \times 10^{-4} \times 10^{-6} \text{ MeV}}$$

$$\approx 1.1 \times 10^9 \text{ MeV} \quad (!).$$

A similar bound applies to protons (read about the GZK bound).