DDK regulates replication initiation by controlling the multiplicity of Cdc45-GINS binding to Mcm2-7

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Abstract

The committed step of eukaryotic DNA replication occurs when the replicative Mcm2-7 helicase pairs that license each replication origin are activated. Helicase activation requires the recruitment of Cdc45 and GINS to Mcm2-7, forming Cdc45-Mcm2-7-GINS complexes (CMGs). Using single-molecule biochemical assays to monitor CMG formation, we found that Cdc45 and GINS are recruited to loaded Mcm2-7 in two stages. Initially, Cdc45 and GINS are individually recruited to unstructured Mcm2-7 N-terminal tails in a Dbf4-dependent kinase (DDK)-dependent manner, forming Cdc45-tail-GINS intermediates (CtGs). The multiple phosphorylation sites on the Mcm2-7 tails promote DDK-dependent modulation of the number of CtGs formed per Mcm2-7. In a second, inefficient event, a subset of CtGs transfer their Cdc45 and GINS components to form CMGs. Importantly, higher CtG multiplicity results in increased frequency of CMG formation. Our findings reveal molecular mechanisms sensitizing helicase activation to DDK levels with implications for the control of replication origin efficiency and timing.

22 **Introduction**

23 Eukaryotic DNA replication coordinates the assembly of multi-protein replisomes at
24 origins of replication to ensure complete genome duplication. Replisome assembly begins during
25 G1 phase when two copies of the Mcm2-7 helicase are loaded around origin DNA as a head-to-
26 head double hexamer (Yardimci and Walter, 2014). In S phase, the association of helicase-
27 activating factors selects a subset of these helicase double hexamers to initiate DNA unwinding
28 and form the core of a bidirectional pair of replisomes (Mantiero et al., 2011, Tanaka et al., 2011).
29 Correct temporal control of helicase activation both ensures that the genome is replicated exactly
30 once per cell cycle (Remus and Diffley, 2009) and reserves a subset of origins to complete
31 replication even if replisomes derived from adjacent origins stall (Blow et al., 2011; Mantiero et
32 al., 2011).

33 Helicase activation is the committed step of replication initiation and is controlled during
34 the cell cycle by two kinases: S-CDK and DDK (Figure 1 - figure supplement 1; Labib, 2010).
35 DDK phosphorylates the long unstructured N-terminal tails of Mcm4 and Mcm6 driving the
36 recruitment of Sld3/7 and Cdc45 to Mcm2-7 double hexamers (Kamimura et al., 2001; Kanemaki
37 and Labib, 2006; Sheu and Stillman, 2010; Heller et al., 2011; Randell et al., 2010; Deegan et al.,
38 2016). S-CDK phosphorylates Sld2 and Sld3/7 leading them to bind to two distinct pairs of BRCT
39 repeats in Dpb11 (Tanaka et al., 2007; Zergerman and Diffley, 2007; Muramatsu et al., 2010).
40 These S-CDK-dependent interactions recruit GINS to Sld3/7 associated with loaded Mcm2-7
41 complexes. Although both Cdc45 and GINS recruitment involve Sld3/7, whether these proteins
42 are recruited by the same or different Sld3/7 molecules is unknown. Cdc45 and GINS are direct
43 activators of the Mcm2-7 complex and association of these factors is required to form a pair of
44 Cdc45-Mcm2-7-GINS complexes (CMGs), the active eukaryotic replicative helicase (Ilves et al.,

45 2010; Moyer et al., 2006; Pacek et al., 2006). Finally, Mcm10 activates CMG complexes to unwind
46 origin DNA (van Deursen et al., 2012; Kanke et al., 2012; Lõoke et al., 2017, Douglas et al., 2018).
47 The result of this process is the formation of two oppositely-directed, active CMG complexes that
48 generate the ssDNA necessary to recruit the rest of the replisome (Bell and Labib, 2016).

49 Although clear in broad strokes, multiple elements of CMG formation and helicase
50 activation remain poorly understood. For example, current studies suggest that there are many
51 Sld3-binding sites on the N-terminal tails of Mcm4 and Mcm6 although a specific binding motif
52 has not been defined (Deegan et al., 2016). However, whether one or multiple sites are used during
53 a given helicase-activation event is unknown. It is also unclear whether Cdc45 recruitment to the
54 two Mcm2-7 complexes in the double hexamer is concerted. The possibility of coordinated Cdc45
55 recruitment is raised by evidence suggesting that Sld3 and Sld7 form a heterotetramer that could
56 facilitate simultaneous recruitment of two Cdc45s (Itou et al., 2015). Lastly, the levels of DDK
57 and a subset of helicase-activation proteins are known to modulate the timing and efficiency of
58 helicase activation (Mantiero et al., 2011; Tanaka et al., 2011). However, the attributes of helicase
59 activation that sensitizes this process to the levels of these proteins is not understood. To answer
60 these questions and investigate the kinetics of the events leading to helicase activation, we
61 developed a single-molecule (SM) method to directly observe this process in real time at a defined
62 origin of replication *in vitro*.

63 Single-molecule biochemical techniques are well equipped to address questions of kinetics
64 and stoichiometry during multi-protein complex assembly events like formation of the eukaryotic
65 replisome (Stratmann and van Oijen, 2014). Previous single-molecule studies have complemented
66 both structural and biochemical studies on helicase loading (Ticau et al., 2015; Ticau et al., 2017;
67 Champasa et al., 2019). Like most complex multi-protein assembly processes, ensemble helicase-

68 activation reactions occur asynchronously due to the large number of protein-DNA and protein-
69 protein interactions involved. In addition, these bulk assays are typically performed as end-point
70 assays with limited kinetic information (Yeeles et al., 2015), preventing detection of transient
71 events. In contrast, single-molecule biochemical studies allow post-hoc synchronization of
72 asynchronous events permitting detailed kinetic analysis. In addition, by allowing real-time
73 visualization, single-molecule approaches can detect short-lived protein-protein or protein-DNA
74 interactions, and determine precise relative stoichiometries.

75 Here we describe single-molecule biochemical assays for CMG formation and helicase
76 activation that recapitulate previously demonstrated dependence on Sld3/7 and DDK. Initial
77 recruitment of Cdc45 to the Mcm2-7 double hexamer occurs in a stepwise fashion. We observe
78 many Cdc45 and GINS binding to individual Mcm2-7 double hexamers. Importantly, DDK levels
79 modulate the number of these binding events and the frequency of final CMG formation.
80 Consistent with these initial binding events being intermediates formed on the DDK-
81 phosphorylated Mcm2-7 N-terminal tails, deleting the Mcm6 N-terminal tail reduces the number
82 of these intermediates and the efficiency of CMG formation. Our findings support a model in
83 which helicase activation is controlled by a combination of DDK-dependent regulation of an initial
84 complex between Cdc45, GINS and the Mcm2-7 tails (the CtG complex) and inefficient
85 conversion of the CtG to CMG complexes.

86

87 **RESULTS**

88 **A single-molecule assay for CMG formation and DNA unwinding**

89 We used Colocalization Single-Molecule Spectroscopy (CoSMoS, Friedman et al., 2006;
90 Hoskins et al., 2011) to observe the process of eukaryotic CMG formation. This SM approach

91 monitors the colocalization of fluorescently-labeled proteins with individual surface-tethered
92 fluorescently-labeled DNA molecules to measure protein-DNA binding events. Fluorescent
93 labeling of Mcm2-7, Cdc45, and GINS was accomplished using a SNAP-tag (Mcm2-7, Gendreizig
94 et al., 2003, Ticau et al., 2015) or sortase-mediated coupling of fluorescent peptides (GINS, Cdc45,
95 and Mcm2-7; Popp et al., 2007; Ticau et al., 2015, see Methods). These fluorescent tags did not
96 interfere with protein function, as assessed by ensemble CMG-formation assays (Figure 1 - figure
97 supplement 2). To prevent loaded Mcm2-7 complexes from sliding off the template prior to CMG
98 formation (Ervin et al., 2009; Remus and Diffley, 2009), we used a 1.2 kb circular DNA containing
99 a single origin of replication. Comparison of the circular template with a 1.3 kb linear template
100 (Ticau et al., 2015) showed that the circular template exhibited a two-fold higher occupancy by
101 Mcm2-7^{4SNAP549} at the end of a 20 min SM helicase-loading assay (Figure 1 - figure supplement
102 3).

103 To perform the CMG-formation reaction in a SM format, we executed a series of sequential
104 incubations and monitored protein fluorescence (Figure 1A). After determining the locations of
105 surface-coupled DNA molecules, we sequentially loaded the Mcm2-7^{4SNAP549} helicase,
106 phosphorylated the loaded helicases with DDK, and then added the remaining proteins necessary
107 to form the CMG (Figure 1 - figure supplement 1, S-CDK, Sld3/7, Cdc45, Dpb11, Sld2, GINS,
108 Pol ε; Yeeles et al., 2015; Heller et al., 2011; Kanemaki and Labib, 2006; Kamimura et al., 2001).
109 To ensure that only loaded Mcm2-7 molecules were present during CMG formation, we included
110 a high-salt wash (HSW1) after DDK phosphorylation to remove helicase-loading intermediates.
111 We initially focused on association of the Cdc45 component of CMG by labeling this protein with
112 a distinct fluorophore (Cdc45^{SORT649}). To focus our observations on the events of CMG formation

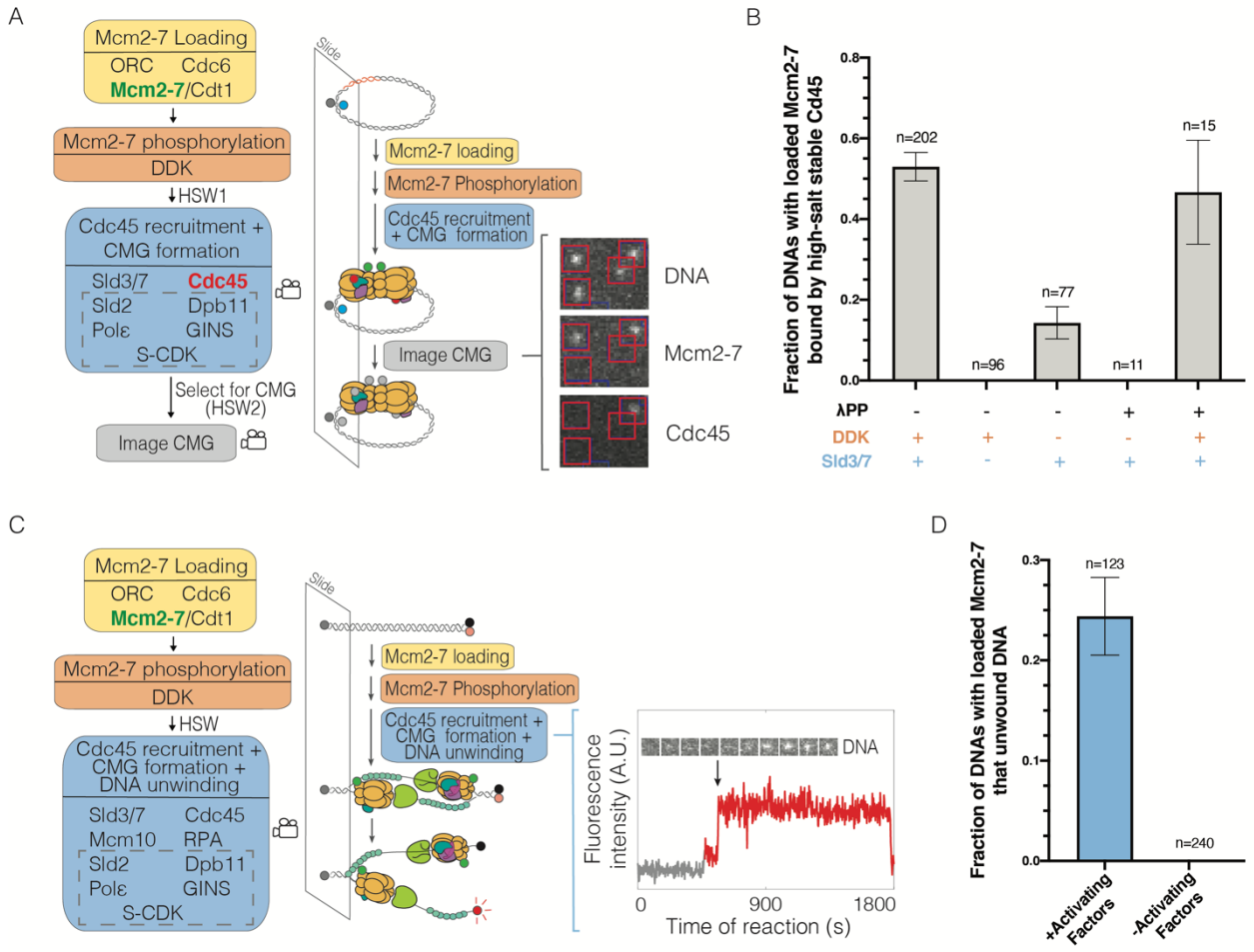

Figure 1. Single-molecule reaction for CMG formation and DNA unwinding. (A) Schematic for the single-molecule CMG formation reaction. Alexa-Fluor-488-labeled (blue circle) circular origin DNA molecules were tethered to the slide surface. Purified Mcm2-7^{4SNAP549} (green circle), Cdc45^{SORT649} (red circle), and other indicated proteins necessary to form the CMG were incubated with slide-coupled DNA in the steps shown. Members of the group of proteins referred to as SDPGC are in the dashed box. A high-salt wash (HSW1) was performed after Mcm2-7 phosphorylation to remove helicase-loading intermediates. Colocalization of fluorescently-labeled proteins with fluorescently-labeled DNA was monitored (indicated by camera icon) during CMG formation and after a second high-salt wash (HSW2). Example images show a small subregion of the microscope field of view taken at a single time point after the CMG formation reaction recorded in the color channels for DNA^{488}, Mcm2-7^{4SNAP549}, and Cdc45^{SORT649}. Red squares are centered on DNA locations. Spots within the red square indicates stable binding of Mcm2-7^{4SNAP549} or Cdc45^{SORT649} after HSW2. **(B)** Cdc45 binding depends on Sld3/7 and DDK phosphorylation. The fraction (± SE) of n DNA molecules with bound Mcm2-7^{4SNAP549} that exhibited high-salt resistant Cdc45^{SORT649} at the first time point after the HSW2 is plotted for each of the conditions. DNAs are counted if they contain Mcm2-7^{4SNAP549} at the beginning of the CMG formation reaction. Where indicated, lambda phosphatase (λPP) was used to dephosphorylate Mcm2-7^{4SNAP549} prior to the Mcm2-7 loading reaction. **(C)** Schematic of the single-molecule DNA-unwinding reaction. Cy5- and BHQ-2-labeled (red and black circles) linear origin DNA molecules were coupled to microscope slides. The same stepwise

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incubations as with the single-molecule CMG-formation assay were used except Mcm10 and RPA were added to the "CMG formation and DNA unwinding step". The plot displays a representative fluorescence intensity record for DNA^{Cy5} (increase in fluorescence indicated by arrow). An objective image-analysis algorithm (Friedman and Gelles, 2015) detected a spot of DNA fluorescence at time points shown in red. **(D)** DNA unwinding is dependent on activating factors. Helicase-activating factors eliminated were: S-CDK, Sld2, Dpb11, Pol ε, GINS, Sld3/7, Cdc45, Mcm10, and RPA. The fraction (± SE) of n DNA molecules that were unwound is plotted for both conditions.

114

115 after helicase loading, we only monitored protein fluorescence after DDK phosphorylation of
116 loaded Mcm2-$7^{4SNAP549}$ double hexamers. During this period, each DNA molecule was
117 continuously monitored for fluorescent-protein colocalization for ~30 min. After the CMG-
118 formation reaction, we performed a second high-salt wash (HSW2) to distinguish fully-formed,
119 salt-resistant CMG complexes from intermediates that are readily removed by this treatment
120 (Yeeles et al., 2015).

121 Analysis of the DNA-associated proteins after the experiment showed multiple hallmarks
122 of CMG formation. Consistent with efficient CMG formation, more than half (0.53 ± 0.04) of the
123 DNAs with loaded Mcm2-$7^{4SNAP549}$ complexes were bound with $Cdc45^{SORT649}$ when observed
124 immediately after the HSW2 high-salt wash (Figure 1B). These binding events were eliminated in
125 the absence of Sld3/7, consistent with $Cdc45^{SORT649}$ recruitment to Mcm2-7 relying on Sld3/7
126 (Figure 1B). Similarly, when Cdc6 was eliminated from the first step of the reaction to prevent
127 helicase loading, subsequent CMG formation was dramatically reduced (fraction of DNAs bound
128 by Cdc45 was 0.12 ± 0.01 versus 0.006 ± 0.006, Figure 1 - figure supplement 4). Thus, CMG
129 formation was dependent on prior helicase loading. In the absence of DDK, high-salt-resistant
130 bound Cdc45 was reduced but not eliminated (Figure 1B). We hypothesized that these "DDK-
131 independent" binding events were due to residual DDK phosphorylation present on Mcm2-7
132 complexes purified from G1-arrested cells (Heller et al., 2011; Tanaka et al., 2011). Consistent
133 with this idea, phosphatase treatment of Mcm2-$7^{4SNAP549}$ prior to helicase loading eliminated CMG

134 formation in the absence of DDK (Figure 1B). We confirmed that phosphatase-treated Mcm2-
135 $7^{4SNAP549}$ remained functional by sequential treatments with phosphatase and DDK. This sequence
136 of treatments rescued CMG formation both in the SM (Figure 1B) and ensemble (Figure 1 - figure
137 supplement 5) settings, demonstrating that the observed CMG formation was fully DDK-
138 dependent.

139 To assess the functionality of the CMGs assembled in the SM setting, we asked whether
140 they were able to unwind DNA. To this end, we generated a linear origin-containing DNA template
141 with a fluorescent dye and a non-fluorescent quencher (BHQ-2) attached to opposing DNA strands
142 at the surface-distal end of the DNA (Kose et al., 2019; Figure 1C). DNA unwinding promotes
143 separation of the fluorescent dye-attached strand from the quencher-attached strand leading to
144 increased dye emission. We simultaneously monitored labeled Mcm2-$7^{4SNAP549}$ and unquenching
145 of the DNA-associated fluorophore in the presence of the proteins required for CMG formation
146 and two additional proteins (Mcm10 and RPA) required for extensive DNA unwinding (Douglas
147 et al., 2018). Consistent with previous *in vitro* assays that showed only a fraction of loaded Mcm2-
148 7 are activated (Douglas et al., 2018), we observed increased fluorescence for a fraction of DNAs
149 with bound Mcm2-$7^{4SNAP549}$ (0.24 ± 0.04, Figure 1D). Importantly, elimination of helicase-
150 activating factors (S-CDK, Cdc45, GINS, Dpb11, Pol ε, Sld3/7, RPA, and Mcm10) from the
151 reaction prevented all unquenching events (Figure 1D). Together, these studies demonstrate that
152 our SM assays for CMG formation and helicase activation exhibit the outcomes and protein
153 dependencies expected based on previous *in vivo* and ensemble *in vitro* studies (Kanemaki and
154 Labib, 2006; Ilves et al., 2010; Heller et al., 2011; Tanaka et al., 2011; Yeeles et al., 2015).
155

156 **Cdc45 binding events to loaded Mcm2-7 are sequential**

157 We next investigated the protein requirements for recruitment of Cdc45^{SORT649} to the
158 Mcm2-7^{4SNAP549}-DNA complex. Initially, we tested a minimal set of proteins predicted to recruit
159 Cdc45 to loaded Mcm2-7 (Kanemaki and Labib, 2006; Heller, 2011; Tanaka et al., 2011). In these
160 experiments, after phosphorylation of loaded Mcm2-7^{4SNAP549} with 1.3 nM DDK, we added only
161 Sld3/7 and Cdc45^{SORT649} (Figure 2A). Under these conditions, we detected dynamic binding of
162 one or two Cdc45^{SORT649} with the majority of Mcm2-7^{4SNAP549}-bound DNA molecules (136/198,
163 Figure 2A and Figure 2 - figure supplement 1). A subset (62/198) of DNAs with loaded Mcm2-
164 7^{4SNAP549} never showed bound Cdc45. Consistent with the dynamic nature of the observed Cdc45
165 interactions and the requirement for additional proteins for CMG formation, in a separate
166 experiment we did not detect high-salt-resistant Cdc45 binding to Mcm2-7 (0/70).
167 To assess the number of Cdc45 molecules bound to loaded Mcm2-7 more accurately, we
168 constructed histograms that compiled Cdc45^{SORT649} intensities measured at all Mcm2-7^{4SNAP549}-
169 bound DNAs in every frame of the recorded images. We modeled these histogram data as the sum
170 of equally spaced Gaussian peaks representing molecules with zero, one, two, or more bound
171 Cdc45^{SORT649}. The model assumed independent binding of Cdc45 to multiple identical sites on
172 Mcm2-7 (see Materials and Methods). Based on this modeling, we determined the fraction of time
173 a specific number of Cdc45^{SORT649} proteins were bound to DNAs with loaded Mcm2-7^{4SNAP549}
174 (Figure 2A and Figure 2C, panel i). This analysis showed that one Cdc45^{SORT649} was bound to a
175 DNA with an Mcm2-7^{4SNAP549} double hexamer 0.222 ± 0.002 of the time and two Cdc45^{SORT649}
176 were bound only 0.079 ± 0.001 of the time (Supplementary file 1 - table 1). We also used this
177 analysis to determine the average number of Cdc45 proteins bound to Mcm2-7^{4SNAP549}. Taking
178 into consideration our finding that 0.73 ± 0.07 of the Cdc45 protein was labeled (see Materials and
179 Methods), we found that, on average, less than one Cdc45 molecule (labeled plus unlabeled) was

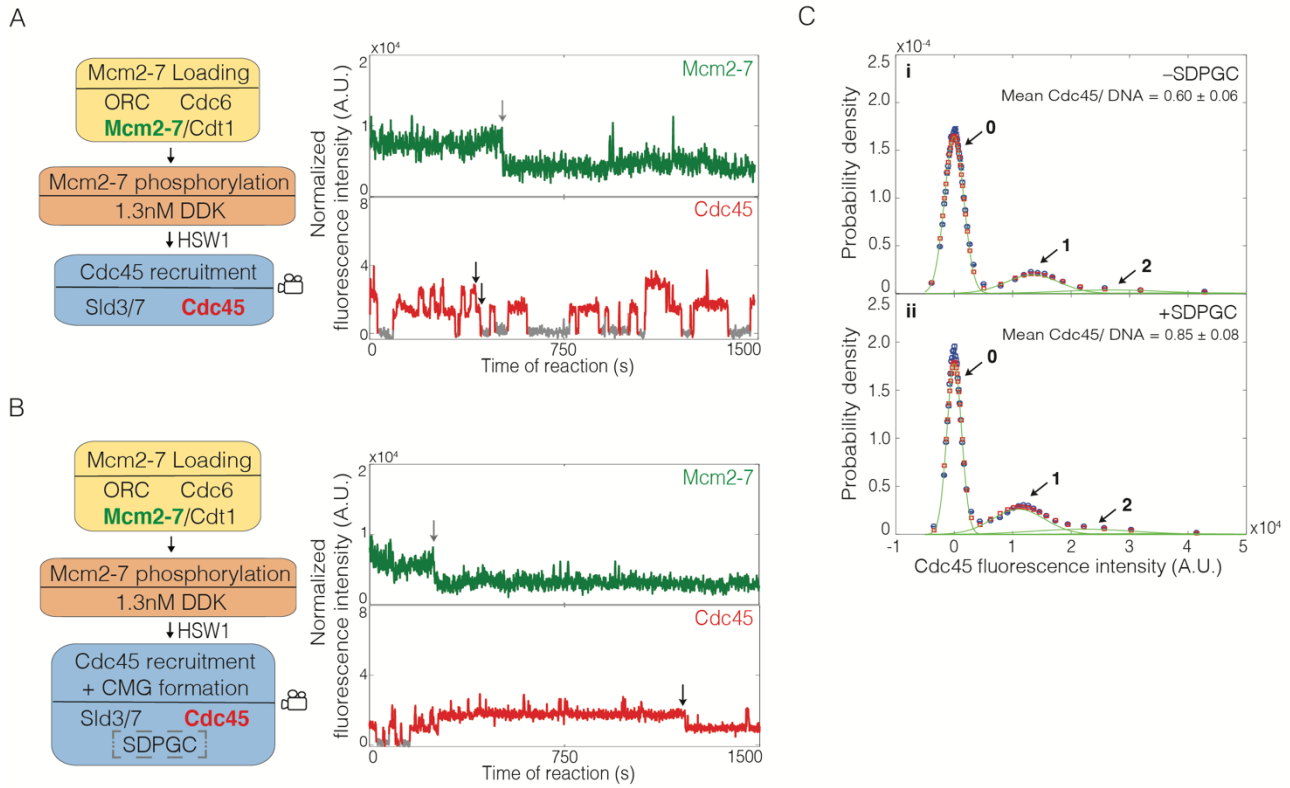

Figure 2. Sld2, Dpb11, Pol ε, GINS, and S-CDK (SDPGC) increases the frequency of Cdc45 binding events to the Mcm2-7 double hexamer. (A) Experiment protocol and representative fluorescence-intensity record for Mcm2-7^{4SNAP549} and Cdc45^{SORT649} at an origin-DNA location with minimal set of proteins required to recruit Cdc45. An objective image-analysis algorithm (Friedman and Gelles, 2015) detected a spot of protein fluorescence at time points shown in red or green. Photobleaching of Mcm2-7^{4SNAP549} is marked by a gray arrow and a set of likely dissociations of Cdc45^{SORT649} molecules are marked by black arrows. **(B)** Experiment protocol and representative fluorescence-intensity record for Mcm2-7^{4SNAP549} and Cdc45^{SORT649} at an origin-DNA location with all the factors required for CMG formation (+SDPGC = Sld2, Dpb11, Pol ε, GINS, and S-CDK). Photobleaching of Mcm2-7^{4SNAP549} is marked by a gray arrow and a potential dissociation of Cdc45^{SORT649} molecules is marked by a black arrow. **(C)** Multiple Cdc45^{SORT649} molecules bind to Mcm2-7^{4SNAP549}-bound DNA. Cdc45^{SORT649} fluorescence-intensity histograms (blue) are shown for two conditions: –SDPGC (i) and + SDPGC (ii). The histogram data were fit to a sum-of-Gaussians model (red; see Materials and Methods). Fit parameters and calculated area fractions of individual Gaussian components (green) corresponding to the presence of the indicated numbers of Cdc45^{SORT649} molecules are given in Supplementary file 1 - table 1. The mean (± SE) numbers of Cdc45 molecules per DNA calculated from the fit parameters and the fraction Cdc45 labeled are indicated.

181 associated with a loaded Mcm2-7 double hexamer (0.60 ± 0.06, Figure 2C, panel i).

182 We considered the possibility that the stepwise increases in Cdc45^{SORT649} fluorescence
183 intensity (e.g., Figure 2A) represented transitions between states with two and four Cdc45
184 molecules instead of states with one and two molecules. If this were the case, however, we would
185 expect to see a large subset of the bound Cdc45 to show half the fluorescent intensity relative to
186 other events on the same DNA molecule. The reason for this expectation is that only a 0.73 ± 0.07
187 fraction of the Cdc45 protein is fluorescently labeled. Given this percentage of protein labeling, if
188 the changes in fluorescent intensities were consistently due to simultaneous binding of two Cdc45
189 molecules, we would expect one of those molecules to be unlabeled $2P(1 - P) = 0.40$ of the time,
190 where P is the fraction labeled. Given the multiplicity of Cdc45 binding events observed on most
191 DNAs, such a situation would result in two levels of increases in fluorescent intensity in any given
192 trace. Instead, we observed Cdc45^{SORT649} fluorescence intensity changes that were consistently
193 similar across a given trace (Figure 2A, bottom panel and Figure 2 - figure supplement 1). There
194 are some events that might represent dimers of Cdc45 binding (e.g., Figure 2A, bottom, ~900 s),
195 but these are rare and are likely to be caused by two individual Cdc45^{SORT649} molecules binding in
196 rapid succession. Thus, we conclude that the multiple Cdc45s binding to Mcm2-7-bound DNA are
197 recruited as monomers in a sequential fashion.

198 We then assessed how Cdc45^{SORT649} binding events changed with the addition of the **S**ld2,
199 **D**pb11, **P**ol ε, **G**INS, and S-**C**DK (SDPGC) proteins, all of which are required for CMG formation
200 (Figure 2B and Figure 2 - figure supplement 2). We added these proteins to an otherwise
201 unchanged reaction using 1.3 nM DDK. Fluorescent analysis showed that the addition of the
202 SDPGC proteins lowered the fraction of time that DNA molecules bound by Mcm2-7^{4SNAP549} were
203 not associated with Cdc45^{SORT649} (−SDPGC 0.682 ± 0.001; +SDPGC, 0.560 ± 0.001,

204 Supplementary file 1 - table 1, rows 1 and 2). Consistent with this change, the average number of
205 Cdc45 proteins (labeled plus unlabeled) on a Mcm2-7^{4SNAP549}-bound DNA increased in these
206 conditions (−SDPGC 0.60 ± 0.06; +SDPGC, 0.85 ± 0.08, Figure 2C, panel i and ii). The addition
207 of the SDPGC proteins did not alter the uniformity of Cdc45^{SORT649} fluorescence intensity
208 increases, consistent with Cdc45 still being recruited as a monomer in a sequential fashion (Figure
209 2B and Figure 2 - figure supplement 2). In contrast to SM experiments lacking the SDPGC proteins
210 that showed no high-salt-resistant Cdc45 binding (0/70), the presence of the SDPGC proteins
211 results in a fraction of loaded Mcm2-7 complexes forming the high-salt resistant Cdc45 complexes
212 characteristic of CMG formation (0.15 ± 0.05, Figure 3A). Together, these results show that the
213 complete set of proteins required for CMG formation leads to additional Cdc45 binding to loaded
214 Mcm2-7, a subset of which go on to form CMG complexes.
215
216 **DDK levels modulate the frequency of CMG formation**
217 Our early experiments with all of the proteins required for CMG formation yielded a relatively
218 low fraction of loaded Mcm2-7 complexes being converted to CMGs. These results led us to
219 consider approaches to increase the efficiency of CMG formation. Because higher DDK levels
220 improve origin initiation efficiency (Mantiero et al., 2011; Tanaka et al., 2011), we explored the
221 impact of increasing DDK concentration. At the higher DDK concentration used in Figure 1 (five-
222 fold increase from 1.3 nM to 6.5 nM), the fraction of Mcm2-7^{4SNAP549}-bound DNAs that became
223 bound by high-salt resistant Cdc45^{SORT649} increased from 0.15 ± 0.05 to 0.53 ± 0.04 (Figure 3A).
224 Elevating DDK concentration five-fold further (to 32.5 nM), increased the fraction of loaded
225 Mcm2-7 complexes forming CMGs from 0.53 ± 0.04 to 0.69 ± 0.06 (Figure 3A). Because the
226 relative increase in CMG formation was more dramatic between 1.3 nM and 6.5 nM (suggesting

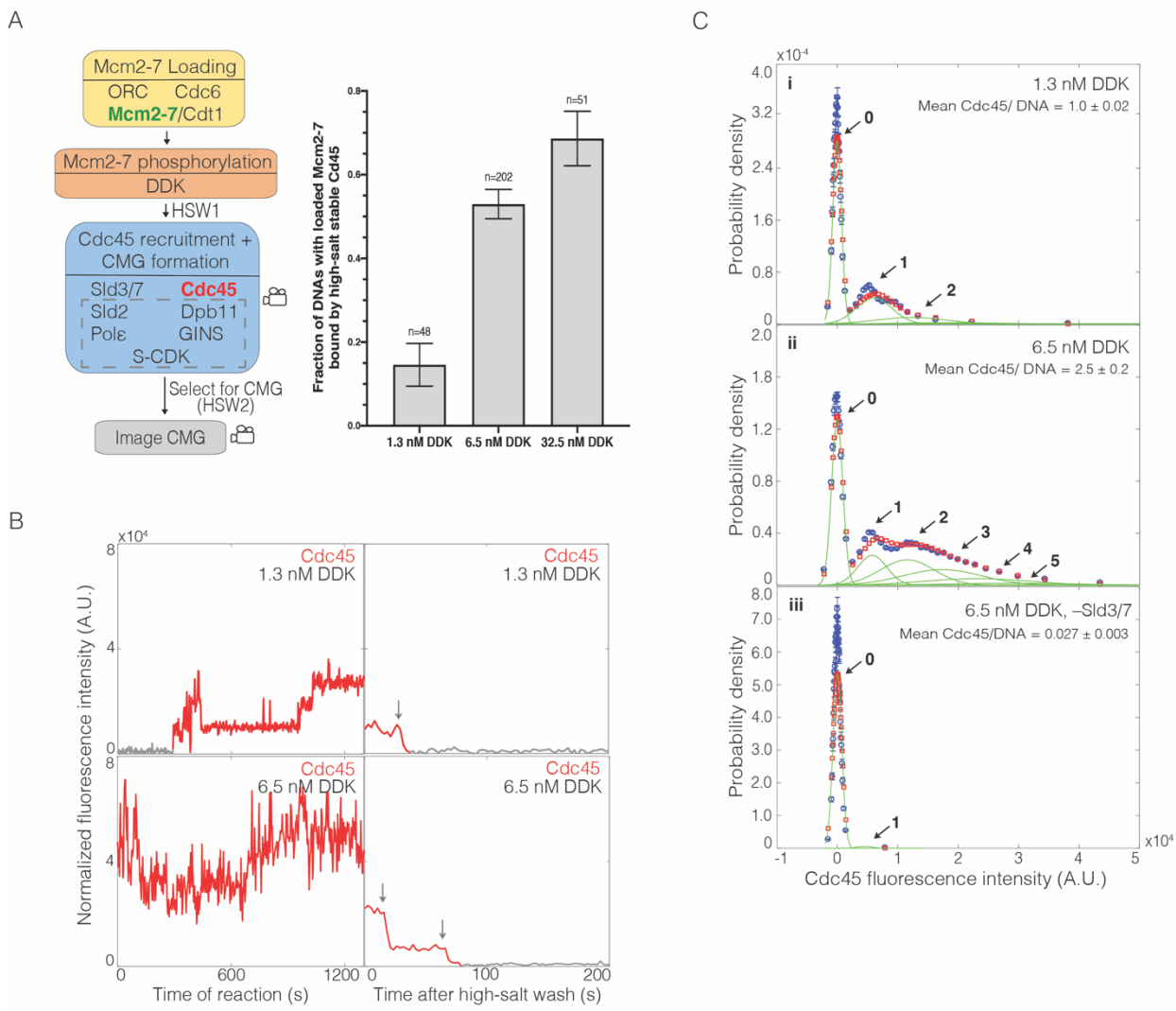

Figure 3. DDK modulates number of Cdc45 binding events and CMG formation efficiency. (A) Increasing DDK concentration results in more efficient CMG formation. The fraction of n (± SE) DNA molecules with loaded Mcm2-7^{4SNAP549} that were bound by high-salt stable Cdc45^{SORT649} are reported for reactions using 1.3 nM, 6.5 nM, or 32.5 nM DDK. Experimental protocol was as in Figure 1A. The data from 6.5 nM DDK condition is the same as Figure 1B, left bar. **(B)** Representative traces for Cdc45^{SORT649} under 1.3 nM and 6.5 nM DDK concentrations. Left panel is during CMG formation and right panel is after high-salt wash (HSW2). Points colored as in Figure 2B. Photobleaching of Cdc45^{SORT649} after the HSW2 is marked by gray arrows. Fluorescence intensities after HSW2 were adjusted to account for the higher excitation laser intensity used during photobleaching. **(C)** Multiple Cdc45^{SORT649} molecules bind to Mcm2-7^{4SNAP549}. Cdc45^{SORT649} fluorescence-intensity histograms (blue) are shown for three conditions: (i) 1.3 nM DDK; (ii) 6.5 nM DDK; and (iii) 6.5nM DDK in the absence of Sld3/7. The histogram data were fit to a sum-of-Gaussians model (red; see Materials and Methods). Fit parameters and calculated area fractions of individual Gaussian components (green) corresponding to the presence of the indicated numbers of Cdc45^{SORT649} molecules are given in Supplementary file 1 - table 1. The mean (± SE) numbers of Cdc45 molecules per DNA calculated from the fit parameters and the fraction Cdc45 labeled are indicated.

227

228 we were approaching saturation at 32.5 nM), we focused our subsequent studies on these two DDK
229 concentrations.

230 Increased DDK levels led to each Mcm2-7^{4SNAP549}-bound DNA interacting with more
231 Cdc45^{SORT649} proteins during the CMG formation reaction (Figure 3B, left panels). Fluorescence
232 intensity analysis revealed that elevating DDK levels to 6.5 nM increased the average number of
233 Cdc45 molecules (labeled plus unlabeled) bound to Mcm2-7 by more than two-fold (1.0 ± 0.1 vs.
234 2.5 ± 0.2; Figure 3C, compare panels i and ii). This analysis also revealed sometimes four or more
235 Cdc45^{SORT649} molecules bound to an individual Mcm2-7^{4SNAP549} double hexamer at 6.5 nM DDK.
236 Importantly, all of the Cdc45^{SORT649} binding events remain Sld3/7-dependent, suggesting that the
237 Cdc45^{SORT649} binding detected requires indirect binding with the Mcm2-7 tails via Sld3/7 (Figure
238 3C, panel iii). The fraction of DNAs with Mcm2-7^{4SNAP549} bound at least once by Cdc45 is similar
239 between the 1.3 nM (40 out of 48 molecules, 0.83 ± 0.05) and 6.5 nM (71/87, 0.82 ± 0.06) DDK
240 conditions, indicating that increasing DDK is primarily impacting the number of Cdc45 molecules
241 bound per double hexamer rather than the fraction of double hexamers that are capable of
242 interacting with Cdc45. Finally, we note that although these data give a sense of the multiplicity
243 of Cdc45 proteins bound to Mcm2-7 at a specific time, these binding events are dynamic. Thus,
244 the number of Cdc45 binding events to an Mcm2-7 double hexamer over the course of the reaction
245 is higher.

246 The multiplicity of the bound Cdc45 suggests that binding occurs on the Mcm4 and Mcm6
247 tails rather than the core of the Mcm2-7 complex. The core of each Mcm2-7 molecule is thought
248 to have only one site that directly binds Cdc45 (the site of Cdc45 association in the CMG, Yuan
249 et al., 2016, Goswami et al., 2018). In contrast, there are many Sld3 binding sites on both the
250 Mcm4 and Mcm6 N-terminal tails (Deegan et al., 2016), each of which could recruit Cdc45. Thus,

251 the appearance of more than two bound Cdc45 molecules indicates that at least a subset (and
252 perhaps most, see below) of the Cdc45 binding events observed under high DDK conditions reflect
253 Cdc45 binding (via Sld3) to the phosphorylated N-terminal tails.
254
255 **Only a subset of the multiple Mcm2-7-bound Cdc45 proteins form CMGs**
256 To determine the number of Cdc45^{SORT649} proteins retained after the second high-salt wash
257 (HSW2, Figure 1A), we increased the laser intensity and monitored protein fluorescence until all
258 the protein-bound dyes were photobleached. Because photobleaching is stochastic, each
259 photobleaching event indicates the presence of one fluorescently-labeled protein. Although our
260 intensity model suggests that a given Mcm2-7 is capable of simultaneously binding four or more
261 Cdc45 molecules during the CMG formation reaction (Figure 3C, panel ii), we never (zero of 202
262 examined) observed that more than two Cdc45^{SORT649} proteins remained bound to a Mcm2-7-
263 bound DNA after the HSW2 high-salt wash (e.g., Figure 3B, right panel). Although it is possible
264 in principle that we undercounted photobleaching events that were not temporally resolved,
265 comparison of the rate of photobleaching under these conditions to the time resolution of the
266 experiment indicated that this would be rare (Figure 3 - figure supplement 1). The maximum of
267 two high-salt resistant Cdc45s is consistent with the interpretation that high-salt resistance
268 indicates that the Cdc45s are incorporated into CMGs (Yeeles et al., 2015). Thus, although
269 increased DDK leads to more Cdc45 proteins binding simultaneously to each Mcm2-7-bound
270 DNA, at most two are incorporated into the final CMG complexes.
271 We frequently observed only one high-salt stable Cdc45^{SORT649} associated with Mcm2-7-
272 bound DNA, leading us to ask whether CMG formation occurred independently or was
273 coordinated for the two Mcm2-7 complexes present in a loaded double hexamer. If CMG

274 formation was coordinated for the two Mcm2-7 complexes, we would expect most of the high-salt
275 resistant Cdc45 to occur in pairs. Using the measured fraction labeled of $Cdc45^{SORT649}$ ($P = 0.73 \pm$
276 0.07), we calculated that if CMG formation was coordinated, 0.57 ± 0.09 (P^2) of the bound high-
277 salt resistant $Cdc45^{SORT649}$ should include two labeled Cdc45s. In contrast, we observed that only
278 42/102 (0.41 ± 0.05) of the Mcm2-7-bound DNAs with salt-resistant Cdc45 included two labeled
279 Cdc45s when CMG formation was performed with 6.5 nM DDK. When the same measurement is
280 performed with 1.3 nM DDK, this fraction drops to 1/7 (0.14 ± 0.13), consistent with lower
281 numbers of bound Cdc45 leading to more frequent formation of a single CMG within the Mcm2-
282 7 double hexamer. These findings suggest that CMG formation on the two Mcm2-7 complexes in
283 each double hexamer can occur independently.
284
285 **Cdc45 dwell times are similar at low and high DDK levels**
286 We next asked whether the complex pattern of Cdc45 binding events observed at high-
287 DDK levels represented a fundamentally different type of Cdc45 association, or an increased
288 frequency of the same type of Cdc45 association observed at lower DDK levels. To distinguish
289 between these two possibilities, we repeated the SM CMG-formation assay with Cdc45 having a
290 reduced labeling fraction (0.036 ± 0.004, see Materials and Methods). These conditions allowed
291 us to observe binding of individual labeled Cdc45 molecules even in the high-DDK context when
292 many additional (unlabeled) Cdc45 were simultaneously bound to the same Mcm2-7-bound DNA
293 (Figure 4A; Figure 4 - figure supplement 1). Having established conditions in which we could
294 consistently observe single Cdc45 molecules bound to Mcm2-7-bound DNA, we determined the
295 distributions of bound Cdc45 dwell times (Figure 4B).

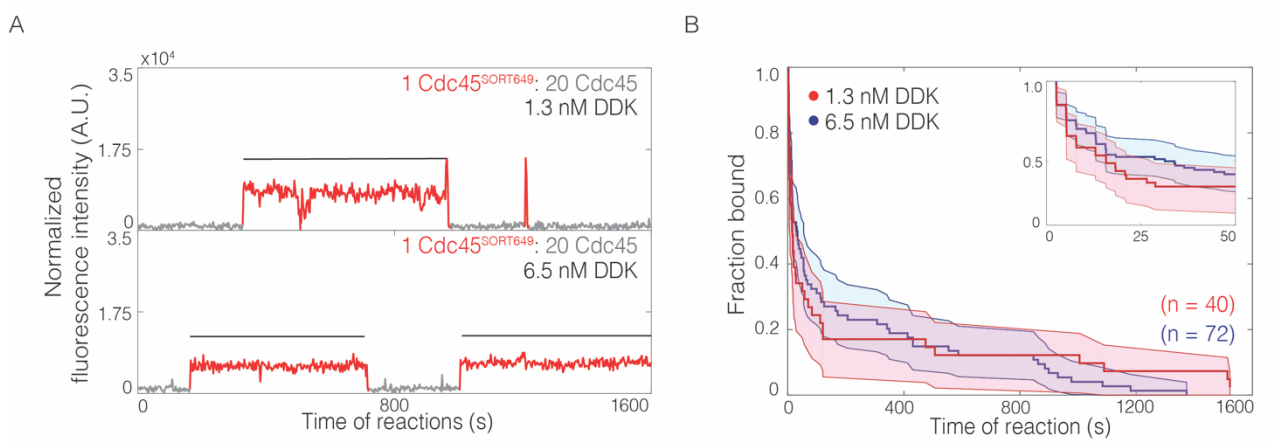

Figure 4. The lifetimes of individual bound Cdc45 molecules are not significantly changed by DDK levels. (A) Representative traces for Cdc45^{SORT649} under conditions in which only 0.036 ± 0.004 of Cdc45 molecules were fluorescently labeled at 1.3 nM (top) and 6.5 nM (bottom) DDK. Points colored as in Figure 2B. Black line indicates single Cdc45^{SORT649} binding. **(B)** Survival function for Cdc45^{SORT649} dwell times on Mcm2-7-bound DNA. The vertical axis represents the fraction of Cdc45^{SORT649} molecules that remain bound after the dwell interval indicated on the horizontal axis. Shaded areas represent the 95% confidence intervals for each curve. Inset: magnified view.

296

297 We did not see a significant difference in the dwell time distributions of Cdc45^{SORT649} at 1.3 nM
298 and 6.5 nM DDK, consistent with the idea that high-DDK levels increases the number of Cdc45
299 associations to Mcm2-7-bound DNA without changing their properties.
300
301 **DDK levels modulate the number of Mcm2-7 tail phosphorylation events.**
302 Elevating DDK levels could change Mcm2-7 phosphorylation in multiple ways. More
303 DDK could increase the number of phosphates per Mcm2-7 complex as well as the fraction of
304 Mcm2-7 complexes that have any phosphates. DDK is known to exhibit stable binding to Mcm2-
305 7 (Sheu and Stillman, 2006; Ramer et al., 2013; Abd Wahab and Remus, 2020), and an extreme
306 model predicts that when DDK binds to Mcm2-7 this interaction leads to complete Mcm4 and
307 Mcm6 tail phosphorylation. If this was the case, then DDK concentration would only modulate
308 the fraction of Mcm2-7 complexes being completely phosphorylated, not the number of
309 phosphates per Mcm2-7 tail. To investigate these possibilities, we exposed loaded Mcm2-7
310 complexes to increasing concentrations of DDK and monitored the extent of phosphorylation of
311 Mcm4 and Mcm6 using Phos-tag™ gels (Figure 4 - figure supplement 2). Changes in the mobility
312 of the Mcm4 and Mcm6 indicated a distribution of numbers of phosphates for both proteins,
313 arguing against the latter model in which only complete tail phosphorylation occurs. Instead, as
314 DDK concentration increases we see evidence for both increasing numbers of phosphates on the
315 Mcm4 and Mcm6 proteins and a higher fraction of the molecules being modified. These findings
316 are consistent with DDK concentration regulating the number of Cdc45 binding through
317 modulation of the number of Mcm4 and Mcm6 tail phosphorylation events.
318
319 **Cdc45-dependent binding of multiple GINS to Mcm2-7**

320 To investigate the incorporation of GINS into CMGs, we performed a SM assay for CMG
321 formation in which GINS was fluorescently labeled (Figure 5A). We first determined the number
322 of $GINS^{SORT649}$ retained after HSW2. Consistent with GINS incorporating into CMGs, we
323 observed that the fraction of Mcm2-7-bound DNAs with bound, high-salt-resistant
324 $GINS^{SORT649}$ increased when the concentration of DDK was raised from 1.3 to 6.5 nM (0.19 ± 0.04
325 vs 0.72 ± 0.04; Figure 5A). As with Cdc45, we never observed more than two high-salt stable
326 $GINS^{SORT649}$ after HSW2 (Figure 5B), and it is unlikely that we missed additional binding events
327 due to simultaneous photobleaching of two $GINS^{SORT649}$ molecules (Figure 5 - figure supplement
328 1). In addition, elimination of Sld3/7 from the assay resulted in a 10-fold reduction in high-salt
329 resistant $GINS^{SORT649}$ bound to Mcm2-$7^{2SORT549}$-bound DNA (0.07 ± 0.02; Figure 5A).
330 We next investigated the binding of GINS to Mcm2-7 during CMG formation. Because GINS is
331 thought to be recruited by indirect interactions (via Dpb11 and Sld2) with S-CDK-phosphorylated
332 Sld3 (Tanaka et al., 2007; Zegerman and Diffley, 2007; Muramatsu et al., 2010), it was possible
333 that we would observe the same DDK-phosphorylation-controlled multiplicity of GINS complexes
334 binding to loaded Mcm2-7 that we observed for Cdc45. Alternatively, it was possible that GINS
335 recruitment could require interactions with the structured regions of Mcm2-7 involved in CMG
336 formation. In that case, we would not observe more than two GINS bound. Consistent with the
337 first model, we observed dynamic binding of many $GINS^{SORT649}$ to Mcm2-$7^{2SORT549}$-bound DNA
338 molecules (Figure 5B). As with Cdc45, the multiplicity of bound $GINS^{SORT649}$ was strongly
339 dependent on the presence of Sld3/7 (compare Figure 5C, panels ii and iii) and Mcm2-7 (Figure 5
340 - supplement 2).
341 The patterns of GINS binding during CMG formation support the hypothesis that
342 GINS is initially recruited to the Mcm4 and Mcm6 tails. Fluorescence intensity analysis revealed

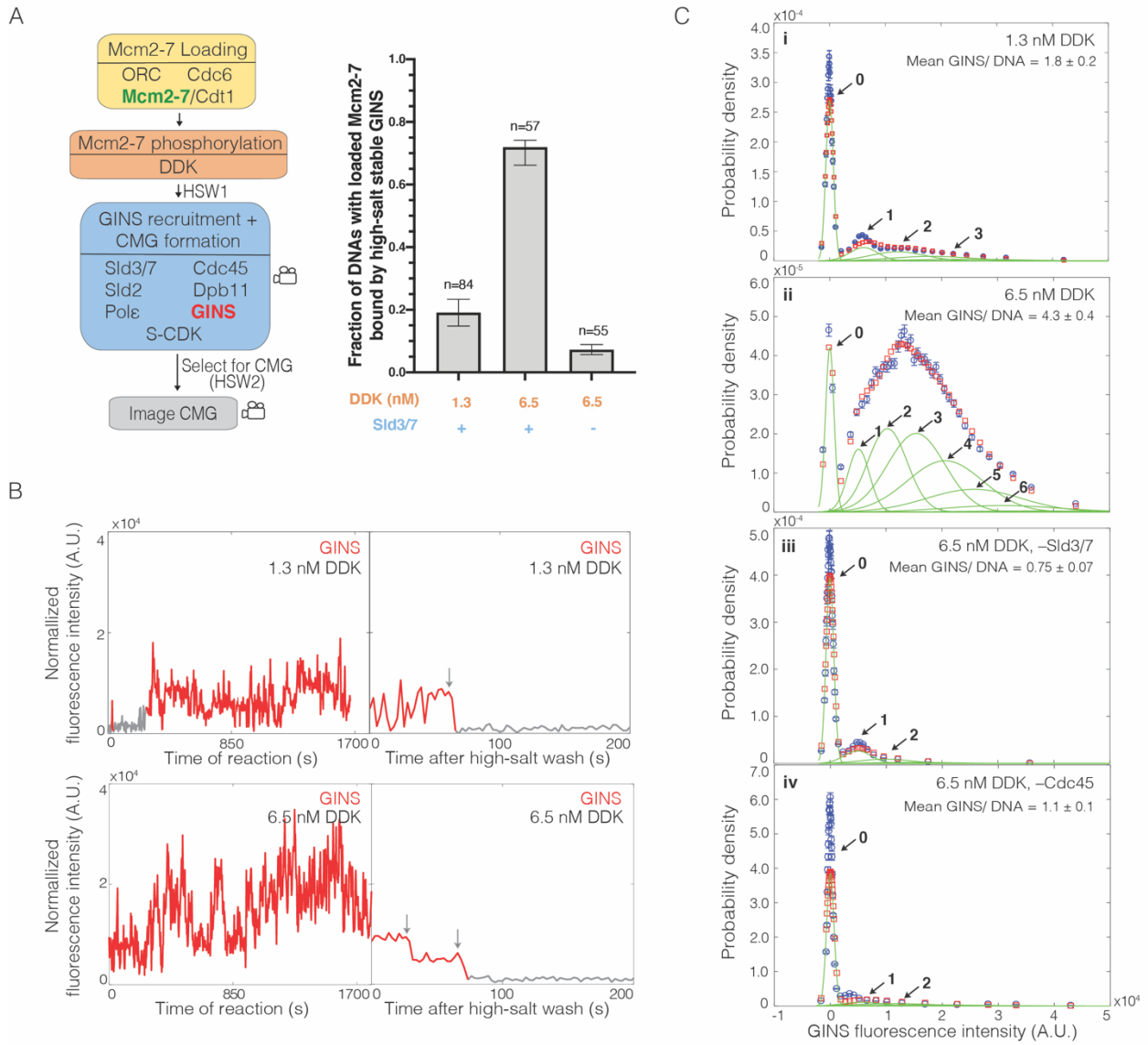

Figure 5. Multiple GINS bind to Mcm2-7. (A) Increasing DDK concentration results in more efficient CMG formation that is dependent on the presence of Sld3/7. Left: schematic representation of the experiment. Right: graph showing the fraction of n Mcm2-7^{2SORT549}-bound DNA molecules that were bound by high-salt stable GINS^{SORT649} under the indicated conditions. **(B)** Representative GINS^{SORT649} fluorescence intensity records at two DNA molecules in the presence of 1.3 nM or 6.5 nM DDK. Left panel is during CMG formation and right panel is the same molecule after the second high-salt wash (HSW2). Points colored as in Figure 2B. Photobleaching of GINS^{SORT649} after HSW2 is marked by gray arrows. **(C)** GINS^{SORT649} fluorescence-intensity histograms (blue) are shown for four conditions: (i) 1.3 nM DDK; (ii) 6.5 nM DDK; (iii) 6.5 nM DDK in the absence of Sld3/7; and (iv) 6.5 nM DDK in the absence of Cdc45. The histogram data were fit to a sum-of-Gaussians model (red; see Materials and Methods). Fit parameters and calculated area fractions of individual Gaussian components (green) corresponding to the presence of the indicated numbers of GINS^{SORT649} molecules are given in Supplementary file 2 - table 1. The mean (± SE) numbers of GINS molecules per DNA calculated from the fit parameters and the fraction GINS labeled are indicated.

343

344 primarily two or fewer GINS^{SORT649} molecules binding to a loaded Mcm2-7^{2SORT549} double
345 hexamer (Figure 5C, panel i) at 1.3 nM DDK. Taking into account the fraction labeled of GINS
346 (0.71 ± 0.07), this analysis indicated an average of 1.8 ± 0.2 total GINS molecules (labeled plus
347 unlabeled) bound per Mcm2-7-bound DNA (Figure 5C, panel i). In contrast, at 6.5 nM DDK, five
348 or more GINS^{SORT649} complexes could bind to an Mcm2-7^{2SORT549}-DNA complex with an average
349 of 4.3 ± 0.4 GINS (labeled plus unlabeled) per Mcm2-7-bound DNA (Figure 5C, panel ii). This
350 average number of bound GINS^{SORT649} is inconsistent with a model where all GINS interactions
351 take place at the two GINS binding sites involved in CMG formation present in a double
352 hexamer. As with Cdc45, the fraction of DNAs with Mcm2-7^{2SORT549} that bound GINS^{SORT649} at
353 least once was similar for 1.3 nM (76/84, 0.90 ± 0.04) and 6.5 nM (54/57, 0.95 ± 0.03). Because
354 almost all complexes bound GINS under both conditions, the impact of DDK on CMG formation
355 is clearly due to increased numbers of GINS bound per Mcm2-7 double hexamer.

356 Current models suggest that GINS is recruited by a series of CDK-dependent protein
357 binding events involving Sld3, Dpb11, and Sld2 (Bell and Labib, 2016, Figure 1 - figure
358 supplement 1). This mechanism raises the possibility that different Sld3 molecules could recruit
359 Cdc45 and GINS. To investigate this possibility, we performed the CMG formation assay with
360 GINS^{SORT649} but in the absence of Cdc45. We observed dramatically lower numbers of bound
361 GINS (Figure 5C, compare panels ii and iv), comparable to those observed in the absence of Sld3/7
362 (Figure 5C, compare panels iii and iv). Thus, we conclude that the initial binding of GINS requires
363 both Sld3/7 and Cdc45 and that the recruitment of GINS and Cdc45 occurs via the same Sld3/7
364 molecules.

365

366 **Loss of Mcm6 N-terminal tail reduces CMG formation**

367 Together, our data support a model in which complexes including both Cdc45 and GINS
368 form at multiple sites on the DDK-phosphorylated Mcm2-7 N-terminal tails. We refer to these
369 complexes as Cdc45-tail-GINS (CtG) complexes. Our data also suggests that increasing the
370 numbers of CtGs formed increases the probability of CMG formation. Based on these
371 observations, we propose that the conversion of CtGs into CMG complexes is inefficient with
372 multiple CtGs releasing prior to successful CMG formation.

373 To test the model that the multiple associations of Cdc45 involve interactions with DDK-
374 phosphorylated Mcm4 and Mcm6, we asked how deleting the Mcm6 N-terminal tail impacted this
375 event. We focused on the Mcm6 N-terminal tail because deletion of the Mcm4 N-terminal tail is
376 lethal (Champasa et al., 2019). We constructed a fluorescently-labeled Mcm2-7 complex that
377 lacked the Mcm6 N-terminal tail (Mcm2-7$^{4SNAP549-6\Delta N}$). Using Mcm2-7$^{4SNAP549-6\Delta N}$ and
378 Cdc45^{SORT649}, we monitored the pattern of Cdc45 binding and the extent of CMG formation using
379 6.5 nM DDK in the SM assay.

380 Consistent with the Mcm6 N-terminal tail contributing to CtG formation, use of the Mcm2-
381 7$^{4SNAP549-6\Delta N}$ mutant in our assay resulted in reduced Cdc45^{SORT649} binding even at 6.5 nM DDK
382 (compare Figure 6A with Figure 3B, bottom panel). Compared to WT Mcm2-7^{4SNAP549} at either
383 1.3 or 6.5 nM DDK, the mutant at 6.5 nM DDK showed a lower fraction of loaded Mcm2-7
384 molecules that were converted to CMGs (Figure 6B). Thus, reducing the numbers of these initial
385 recruitment events by eliminating the Mcm6 N-terminal tail clearly alters the efficiency of CMG
386 formation. Consistent with the low number of CMGs, the average number of Cdc45 (labeled plus
387 unlabeled bound to Mcm2-7$^{4SNAP549-6\Delta N}$ during CMG formation at 6.5 nM DDK was also low (0.10
388 ± 0.01, Figure 6C). Together, these data indicate that the Mcm6 N-terminal tail contributes to
389 recruiting or retaining multiple Cdc45 proteins. Given the dependence of GINS association on

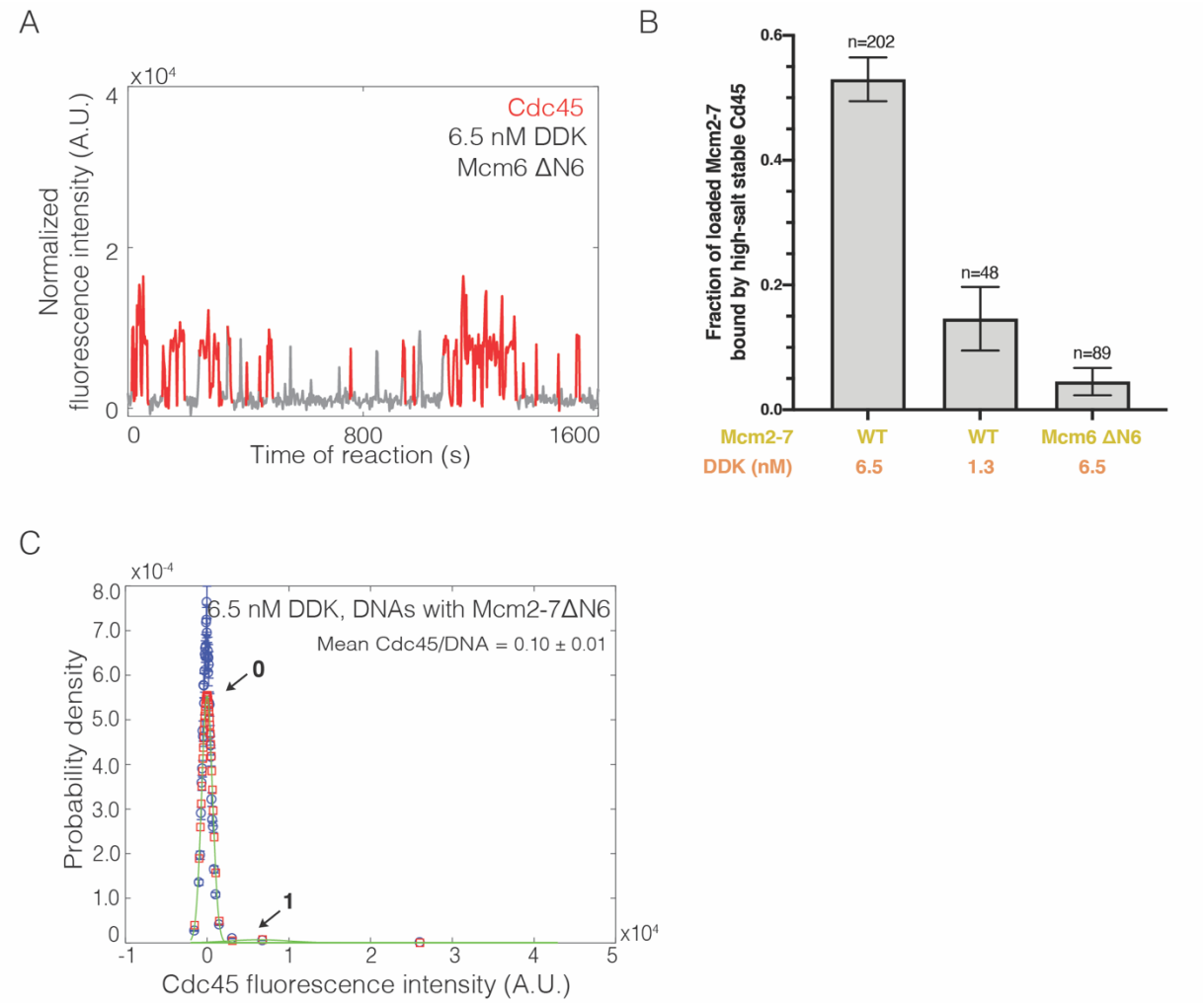

Figure 6. Loss of the Mcm6 N-terminal tail reduces Cdc45 binding events and CMG formation. (A) Representative trace for Cdc45^{SORT649} binding to Mcm2-7$^{4SNAP549\text{-}6\Delta N}$-bound DNA during CMG formation at 6.5 nM DDK. Points colored as in Figure 2B. **(B)** Deletion of the Mcm6 N-terminal tail reduced high-salt stable Cdc45 binding to Mcm2-7-bound DNAs, indicative of CMG formation. The data from 1.3 nM and 6.5 nM DDK are the same as Figure 3A. **(C)** Binding of Cdc45^{SORT649} to Mcm2-7$^{4SNAP5496\Delta N}$-bound DNA. Fit parameters and calculated area fractions of individual Gaussian components (green) corresponding to the presence of the indicated numbers of Cdc45^{SORT649} molecules are given in Supplementary file 1 - table 1. The mean (± SE) number of Cdc45 molecules per DNA calculated from the fit parameters and the fraction Cdc45 labeled are indicated.

390

391 Cdc45, we infer that binding of GINS is also dependent on the Mcm6 N-terminal tail. Thus,
392 deletion of the Mcm6 N-terminal tail reduces both the initial recruitment of Cdc45 and the
393 formation of CMGs.
394
395 **Discussion**
396 **Cdc45 and GINS are recruited by the Mcm2-7 N-terminal tails**
397 The studies presented here provide evidence for a new intermediate in the helicase-
398 activation process, the CtG, which can form at multiple sites on the Mcm2-7 N-terminal tails. We
399 found that DDK levels modulate the number of these intermediates formed per loaded Mcm2-7
400 complex and that only a subset of CtG transition to a CMG (Figure 7). We propose that the
401 combination of these properties create a mechanism that sensitizes helicase activation to DDK
402 activity, in order to control replication initiation efficiency.
403 Previous studies found that Sld3 contains a phosphopeptide-binding domain that
404 recognizes both DDK-dependent and DDK-independent phosphorylation sites on Mcm4 and
405 Mcm6 N-terminal tails (Deegan et al., 2016). Binding of Sld3 to the DDK-dependent
406 phosphorylation sites is required for the recruitment of Cdc45 to the Mcm2-7 double hexamer
407 (Deegan et al., 2016). It was not clear, however, if these interactions involved only the Mcm4 and
408 Mcm6 tails or additional sites on Mcm2-7, how they led to subsequent CMG formation, or how
409 the many potential binding sites for Sld3/7 on Mcm4 and Mcm6 tails contributed.
410 Here we present several lines of evidence that support the initial recruitment of both GINS
411 and Cdc45 involve formation of a multi-protein complex with the Mcm2-7 N-terminal tails. First,
412 there are only two non-tail binding sites on Mcm2-7 for Cdc45 or GINS, and yet we see more than
413 two of these proteins bound during CMG formation (Figure 3 and Figure 5). Second, because the

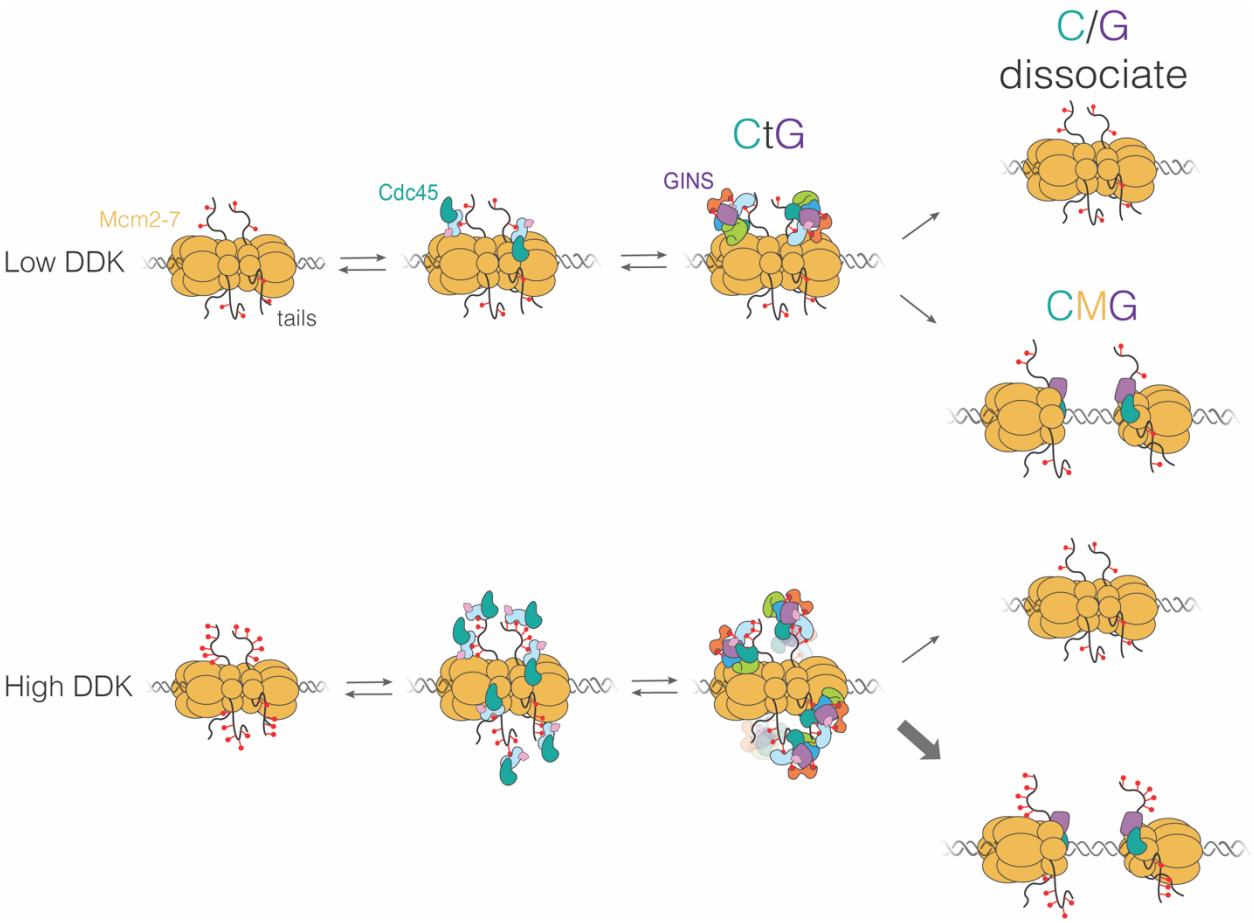

Figure 7. Proposed model for CMG formation. DDK levels control the amount of Mcm4 and Mcm6 N-terminal tail phosphorylation. These modifications indirectly (via Sld3/7) recruit Cdc45 and GINS, forming the CtG intermediate. The CtG intermediate can then follow one of two paths: a) dissociation, or b) deposition onto the structured core of the Mcm2-7 helicase to form the CMG. We hypothesize that the rate of this conversion is the same for any CtG, but it is infrequent. Thus, having more CtGs (e.g., at higher DDK levels) increases the probability of CMG formation, which we assume is irreversible. Relevant proteins are labeled in the illustration; red lollipops represent phosphorylations; CtG = Cdc45-tails-GINS; CMG = Cdc45-Mcm2-7-GINS; C/G = Cdc45-GINS.

414

415 Mcm4 and Mcm6 N-terminal tails are the targets of DDK and Sld3 binding (Sheu and Stillman,
416 2006; Randell et al., 2010; Deegan et al., 2013), the dependence of the multiple Cdc45 and GINS
417 binding events that we observe on DDK activity and Sld3/7 is consistent with a Mcm2-7 tail
418 binding site (Figure 1B, Figure 3C, and Figure 5). Third, the dwell time distributions of Cdc45
419 associations at high or low DDK levels are similar (Figure 4), arguing that the increased
420 multiplicity of Cdc45 binding is not due to a distinct mechanism of Cdc45 association at high DDK
421 levels. Fourth, eliminating the Mcm6 N-terminal tail, greatly reduces CtG formation (Figure 6).
422 Finally, the strong dependence of GINS recruitment on the presence of Cdc45 is consistent with a
423 simple mechanism in which these proteins are recruited sequentially to the tails to form a single
424 complex rather than binding with the tails at independent positions (Figure 5C).

425 Our evidence also supports the CtG being an intermediate on the way to CMG formation.
426 Consistent with this hypothesis, elimination of factors that promote CtG formation (e.g., DDK and
427 Sld3/7) also inhibit CMG formation (Figure 1B and Figure 5A). Similarly, elimination of a subset
428 of CtG binding sites by deleting the Mcm6 N-terminal tail, results in a strong reduction in CMG
429 formation (Figure 6B). Indeed, throughout our studies we observe a strong correlation between the
430 number of CtGs formed on a Mcm2-7 double hexamer and the efficiency of CMG formation.

431

432 **What are the components of the CtG?**

433 Although our findings indicate that the CtG minimally includes Cdc45 and GINS bound to
434 Mcm6 (and likely Mcm4) N-terminal tail(s), this complex is likely to contain other proteins
435 involved in CMG formation. The robust Sld3/7 dependence of Cdc45 and GINS binding to Mcm2-
436 7 (Figure 3 and Figure 5) suggests that the CtG includes this protein. Current models propose that
437 a network of interactions between Sld3, Dpb11, Sld2, and GINS are required to form the CMG

438 (Tanaka et al., 2007; Zegerman and Diffley, 2007; Muramatsu et al., 2010). Given Sld3's known
439 binding to phosphorylated N-terminal tails (Deegan et al., 2016), the simplest model is that these
440 interacting proteins are required to form CtGs, and subsequently CMGs. It is possible that Pol ε
441 is simultaneously recruited with GINS to the CtG as part of a preformed pre-LC complex
442 (Muramatsu et al., 2010).

443 The full set of roles performed by Sld3, Dpb11, Sld2, and Pol ε in CtG and CMG formation
444 remains to be determined. These proteins could be involved only in CtG assembly or their release
445 could facilitate the transition of Cdc45 and GINS binding with the Mcm2-7 tails to form the final
446 interactions characteristic of the CMG. Finally, the requirement of Cdc45 to recruit GINS (Figure
447 5C, panel iii) strongly suggests that the CtG involves direct interactions between these proteins,
448 suggesting the interesting possibility that key interactions between these proteins involved in the
449 CMG are already present in the CtG.

450

451 **DDK effects are mediated by inefficient CtG to CMG conversion**

452 Our studies indicate that the conversion from CtG to CMG is inefficient. With low DDK
453 levels, we often observed two Cdc45 proteins that associated with Mcm2-7 double hexamers over
454 long periods of time (>100 sec; 33 long-lived binding events/48 double hexamers). However, only
455 seven of these 33 converted to CMGs (Figure 3A), indicating that most of the CtGs either
456 dissociate or fail to become part of the CMG before the end of the experiment (Figure 7, top). We
457 hypothesize that this inefficient conversion is true at all DDK concentrations. When DDK
458 concentration was raised, we observed increased multiplicity of CtG formation (Figure 3A and
459 5A). In contrast, increased DDK is not associated with a significant change in dwell times of
460 individual Cdc45 molecules (Figure 4) or the fraction of Mcm2-7 double hexamers bound by

461 Cdc45 or GINS. Based on these findings we propose that, due to the inefficient conversion of CtGs
462 to CMGs, the increased multiplicity of CtGs on a given double hexamer at higher DDK levels
463 leads to increased opportunities for CtG conversion to CMG (Figure 7, bottom) and, therefore,
464 increased rates of origin activation.
465
466 **Implications for the control of cellular origin activation**
467 Our model is consistent with studies addressing the control of origin initiation efficiency
468 and replication timing (Mantiero et al., 2011; Tanaka et al., 2011). These studies showed that
469 increasing the expression of a subset of limiting helicase-activation proteins, including the Dbf4
470 regulatory subunit of DDK, increased origin initiation efficiency and advanced the time of
471 replication initiation for late initiating origins. Our findings suggest that these changes would
472 increase the number of CtGs formed per double hexamer and consequently the efficiency of CMG
473 formation. We propose that the combination of multiple potential phosphorylation sites on the
474 Mcm4 and Mcm6 tails, and the inefficient conversion of the CtGs formed on the tails to the CMG,
475 tunes the helicase-activation process to respond to levels of DDK and other helicase-activation
476 factors. Consistent with this model, reducing the number of phosphorylation sites by deleting the
477 Mcm6 tail reduced CtG and CMG formation at the same DDK levels (Figure 6).
478 Our proposed mechanism is analogous to the regulation of Sic1 proteolysis by CDK (Nash
479 et al., 2001). Multiple CDK phosphorylation sites on Sic1 are each weakly recognized by the Cdc4
480 F-box protein, leading to ubiquitinylation and degradation of Sic1. Although weakly bound, the
481 accumulation of multiple phosphorylation sites on Sic1 promotes a switch-like response to CDK
482 levels. We propose that the similar mechanisms are operating during helicase activation, with the
483 Mcm4 and Mcm6 tails providing the multiple phosphorylation-dependent binding sites and the

484 inefficient conversion of the CtG to the CMG performing the role analogous to the suboptimal
485 Cdc4 interaction.

486 Processes beyond those shown in Figure 7 are likely to play important roles in origin
487 activation. For example, our experiments did not include phosphatases that could counteract the
488 action of DDK and CDK. Such phosphatases might be recruited by Rif1, a protein that interacts
489 with protein phosphatase 1 and has been implicated in the regulation of replication initiation
490 (Hafner et al., 2018; Hiraga et al., 2014, 2018; Mattarocci et al., 2018). The presence of
491 phosphatases could regulate Mcm2-7 N-terminal tail phosphorylation levels, further sensitizing
492 origin activation to changes in DDK level. In addition, phosphatases may be essential to remove
493 Mcm2-7-tail phosphorylation after helicase activation to ensure that the tails of active helicases do
494 not continue to compete for limiting helicase-activation factors.

495

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500

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507

508 **Author contributions**

509 L.D.J.K. performed all experiments with feedback from J.G., L.J.F., and S.P.B. C.R. made
510 constructs and partially purified mutant protein for Figure 6. L.D.J.K., L.J.F., and J.G. analyzed
511 the data. S.P.B. and L.D.J.K. composed the paper with input from all authors. S.P.B. and J.G.
512 directed the project.

513

514 **Materials and Methods**

515 **Preparation of unlabeled proteins**

516 Wild-type unlabeled Mcm2-7/Cdt1 and ORC complexes were purified as described previously
517 (Kang et al., 2014). Wild-type Cdc6 was purified as described in Frigola et al. (2013). Wild-type
518 DDK, S-CDK, Sld3/7, Sld2, unlabeled Cdc45, Dpb11, unlabeled GINS, Mcm10, Pol ε and RPA
519 were purified as described in Lõoke et al. (2017).

520

521 **Preparation of GINS^{SORT649}**

522 Plasmid pFJD5 (gift from K. Labib) was modified with a His-Tag followed by a PreScission
523 Protease tag at the N-terminus of Psf3 and a LPTEGG at the C-terminus of Psf3 (pLD01,
524 Supplementary file 3–table 2) to facilitate peptide addition by Sortase. The plasmid was expressed
525 in BL21 (D3) competent *E. coli* (NEB) and purified as described in Yeeles et al. (2015) with the
526 following modifications. After eluting from HisPur Ni-NTA resin (ThermoFisher Scientific), the
527 eluates were incubated with excess PreScission Protease at 4°C overnight, then incubated with
528 HisPur Ni-NTA resin to remove any uncleaved GINS. The unbound protein was collected and
529 applied to MonoQ column as described in Yeeles et al. (2015). The peak GINS fractions were

530 collected and Sortase was used to attach the peptide NH_2-GGGHHHHHHHHHHC-COOH
531 coupled to maleimide-Dy649P1 (Dyomics) to the C-terminus of Psf3 to form $GINS^{SORT649}$. Sortase
532 coupling of the fluorescent peptide was performed as described in Ticau et al. (2017). After
533 fluorescent labeling, $GINS^{SORT649}$ was applied to a Superdex S200 column as described in Yeeles
534 et al. (2015). Peak fractions were pooled and applied to Ni-NTA resin pre-equilibrated with buffer
535 H (25 mM HEPES-KOH [pH 7.6], 5 mM MgOAc, 10% glycerol, and 0.02% NP-40),
536 supplemented with 200 mM potassium acetate (KOAc), 0.02% Nonidet P-40 (NP-40) and 10 mM
537 imidazole, for 30 min with rotation at 4°C to separate peptide-coupled GINS from uncoupled
538 GINS. The resin was washed with buffer H, supplemented with 200 mM KOAc, 0.02% NP-40 and
539 30 mM imidazole. Fluorescently labeled $GINS^{SORT649}$ was eluted using buffer H, supplemented
540 with 200 mM KOAc, 0.02% NP-40 and 250 mM imidazole. Peak fractions were pooled, aliquoted,
541 and stored at -80°C.
542
543 **Preparation of $Cdc45^{SORT649}$**
544 A CDC45 expressing plasmid was modified by appending sequences encoding a Flag-epitope
545 followed by LPETGG at the 5' end of the gene of plasmid pMM032 (Supplementary file 3–table
546 2). This plasmid was integrated into genome of yMH109 to create yMM034 (Supplementary file
547 3–table 1). This strain was used to purify Cdc45 as described in Lõoke et al. (2017) with the
548 following modifications. After elution from anti-Flag M2 affinity gel (Sigma), the eluate was
549 attached with Sortase to the peptide NH_2-GGGHHHHHHHHHHC-COOH coupled to maleimide-
550 Dy649P1 (Dyomics) as described in Ticau et al. (2017). The modified protein was applied to a
551 Superdex S75 column equilibrated with buffer H, supplemented with 0.3 M KGlut and 5%
552 glycerol. The peak fractions were applied to a HisPur Ni-NTA resin (ThermoFisher Scientific)

553 equilibrated with buffer H, supplemented with 300 mM KGlut and 5 mM imidazole, for 30 min
554 with rotation at 4°C to separate peptide-coupled from uncoupled Cdc45. The flow-through was
555 discarded and the resin was washed with buffer H, supplemented with 300 mM KGlut, and 20 mM
556 imidazole. Fluorescently labeled Cdc45^{SORT649} was eluted using buffer H, supplemented with 300
557 mM KGlut and 250 mM imidazole. Peak fractions were pooled, aliquoted, and stored at -80°C.
558

559 **Preparation of Mcm2-7^{4SNAP549}, Mcm2-7$^{4SNAP5496\Delta N}$, and Mcm2-7^{2SORT549}**

560 The Mcm6-Mcm7 overexpression plasmid was modified by deleting the sequences encoding
561 Mcm6 amino acids 2 to 105 to create the plasmid pCKR006 (Supplementary file 3–table 2**)**. This
562 plasmid was integrated into the genome of a strain that contained expression constructs for Mcm2,
563 Mcm3, Mcm4, Mcm5 and Cdt1 to create the yeast strain yCKR006 (Supplementary file 3–table
564 1**)**. Mcm2-7/Cdt1 ΔN6 (yCKR006), Mcm2-7/Cdt1 SORT-tag (LPETGG at the C-terminus of
565 Mcm2 for fluorescent labeling, yST179, Supplementary file 3–table 1), and Mcm2-7/Cdt1 SNAP-
566 tag (SNAP-tagged at Mcm4 for fluorescent labeling, yST147, Supplementary file 3–table 1) were
567 purified from the indicated yeast strains as described previously (Kang et al., 2014) with the
568 following modifications. After ultracentrifugation, the whole cell extract was applied to 1 mL of
569 anti-Flag M2 affinity gel (Sigma) pre-equilibrated with buffer H, 200 mM KGlut, 0.01% NP-40
570 and 1 mM ATP and incubated with rotation for 2 hrs at 4°C. The flow-through was discarded and
571 the resin was washed with 30 mL of buffer H, supplemented with 300 mM KGlut, 0.01% NP-40
572 and 1 mM ATP. Mcm2-7/Cdt1 was eluted with buffer H, supplemented with 300 mM KGlut,
573 0.01% NP-40, 1 mM ATP and 0.1 mg/mL 3xFLAG peptide for the first elution and with 0.3
574 mg/mL 3xFLAG peptide for the consecutive elutions. After elution from anti-Flag M2 affinity gel,
575 the eluate was fluorescently labeled as follows. For Mcm2-7^{4SNAP549} and Mcm2-7$^{4SNAP5496\Delta N}$

576 (SNAP at the N-terminus of Mcm4), the FLAG eluate was labeled with SNAP-Surface549 (NEB)
577 by incubating 3x molar excess of dye at 4°C overnight. After coupling the protein to the
578 fluorophore, the reaction was applied to a Superdex S200 column equilibrated with buffer H,
579 supplemented with 300 mM KGlut, 0.01% NP-40, and 1 mM ATP. Peak fractions containing
580 Mcm2-7$^{4SNAP5496 \text{ or } 4SNAP5496\Delta N}$ /Cdt1 were pooled, aliquoted, and stored at -80°C. Mcm2-
581 7^{4SNAP549}/Cdt1 was used in all experiments with Cdc45^{SORT649}, with exception of experiments with
582 N-terminal mutant Mcm2-7.
583
584 For Mcm2-7^{2SORT549}/Cdt1 (LPETGG at the C-terminus of Mcm2) the FLAG eluate was attached
585 with Sortase to the peptide NH_2-GGGHHHHHHHHHHC-COOH coupled to maleimide-Dy649P1
586 (Dyomics) as described in Ticau et al. (2017). Mcm2-7^{2SORT549}/Cdt1 was applied to a Superdex
587 S200 column equilibrated with buffer H, supplemented with 300 mM KGlut, 0.01% NP-40, and 1
588 mM ATP. Peak fractions containing fluorescently labeled Mcm2-7^{2SORT549}/Cdt1 were pooled,
589 aliquoted, and stored at -80°C. Mcm2-7^{2SORT549}/Cdt1 was used in all experiments with
590 GINS^{SORT649}.
591
592 **Determining Mcm2-7, Cdc45 and GINS labeling fraction**
593 To determine what fraction of Mcm2-7^{4SNAP549} were fluorescently labeled, SNAP-Surface549
594 labeled Mcm2-7 was mixed with maleimide-DY-649P1 dissolved in anhydrous DMSO in a 1:1
595 ratio, and the reaction and analysis was carried out as described in Ticau et al. (2015). The labeled
596 fraction for Mcm2-7^{4SNAP549} was determined to be 0.73 ± 0.07. To determine the labeling fraction
597 of Cdc45^{SORT649} (and GINS^{SORT649}) was mixed with maleimide-DY549P1 dissolved in anhydrous
598 DMSO in a 1:1 molar ratio at 4°C for 10 min. The maleimide-DY549P1 would label all free

599 cysteines in the protein. The reaction was terminated with 2 mM DTT. We added 5 nM of
600 maleimide-DY549P1-labeled Cdc45^{SORT649} (or 8nM maleimide-DY549P1-labeled GINS^{SORT649})
601 to the SM CMG-formation assay with 1.3 nM DDK to obtain single Cdc45^{SORT649} (or GINS^{SORT649})
602 traces. The fraction of maleimide-DY549P1-labeled Cdc45^{SORT649} (or GINS^{SORT649}) that also
603 contained DY-649P1 was determined and reported as the percent labeling by the DY-649P1 (we
604 assume that coupling of maleimide-DY-549P1 or DY-649P1 to Cdc45, Mcm2-7, and GINS are
605 not influenced by the presence or absence of the 649 or 549 label). The labeled fraction for
606 Cdc45^{SORT649} and GINS^{SORT649} were determined to be 0.73 ± 0.07 and 0.71 ± 0.07, respectively.
607 To lower the labeling fraction of Cdc45^{SORT649} to 0.036, the Cdc45^{SORT649} preparation was mixed
608 at a 1:19 ratio with unlabeled Cdc45.
609
610 **Generation of circular template**
611 To create biotin- and fluorescently-labeled circular origin DNA, a 1.3 kb ARS1-containing interval
612 of the DNA plasmid template pUC19-ARS1 was amplified with NotI-site containing primers, one
613 of which contained a biotin and the other an Alexa-Fluor-488 dye. After PCR cleanup with
614 QIAquick PCR Purification Kit (Qiagen), the PCR product was digested with NotI at 37°C for 4
615 hrs and repurified with a QIAquick PCR Purification Kit. We next performed a ligation with 0.2
616 ng/uL of digested DNA and 0.04 U/uL of T4 DNA ligase (NEB) at 18°C overnight to favor
617 intramolecular ligation. The ligation products were purified by phenol-chloroform extraction and
618 concentrated by ethanol precipitation. The concentrated DNA was then run on a 1.5% TBE-
619 agarose gel and the circular DNA band was extracted and purified with QIAquick Gel Extraction
620 Kit (Qiagen).
621

622 **Single-molecule assay for CMG formation**

623 Biotinylated Alexa-Fluor-488-labeled, 1.2-kb-long circular-DNA molecules containing an origin
624 were coupled to the surface of a reaction chamber through streptavidin. We identified DNA
625 molecule locations by acquiring 4-7 images with 488 nm excitation at the beginning of the
626 experiment. Helicase loading reaction was performed as described in Ticau et al. (2015). Reaction
627 buffers for helicase loading were as described in Ticau et al. (2015). All subsequent steps (i.e.,
628 Mcm2-7 phosphorylation and CMG formation) used the same helicase-loading buffer. After
629 helicase loading either 1.3 or 6.5 nM DDK was added. Chambers were then washed with two
630 chamber volumes of buffer A (25 mM HEPES-KOH [pH 7.6], 5 mM magnesium acetate
631 (MgOAc), 0.02% NP-40), supplemented with 0.5 M NaCl (HSW1), followed by one chamber
632 volume of buffer A supplemented with 300 mM KGlut. Next, CMG-formation reaction was added
633 containing 7.5 nM CDK, 15.5 nM Sld2, 10 nM Dpb11, 7.5 nM Pol ε, 50 nM GINS, 12.5 nM Sld3/7
634 and 12.5 nM Cdc45. DNA was imaged immediately after adding the CMG-formation reaction to
635 the slide but not throughout the experiment. When using Cdc45^{SORT649} or GINS^{SORT649}, they were
636 added at 5 nM and 7 nM, respectively. After ~30 min, chambers were washed with four chamber
637 volumes of buffer A supplemented with 0.5 M NaCl (HSW2) followed by one chamber volume
638 of buffer A supplemented with 300 mM KGlut.

639

640 **Single-molecule assay for DNA unwinding**

641 To obtain the 1.1 kb linear-DNA molecules used for the DNA unwinding assay, the same origin-
642 containing interval of pUC19-ARS1 was amplified with a NotI-site containing primer and a biotin-
643 containing primer. The PCR-amplified DNA was digested with Not1, purified with a QIAquick
644 PCR Purification Kit (Qiagen), and ligated with oligos each containing a Cy5- or BHQ-2 label and

645 NotI sticky ends (NEB) complimentary to the amplified DNA template. After ligation, the DNA
646 product was purified with a QIAquick PCR Purification Kit (Qiagen). The DNA was coupled to
647 the surface of a reaction chamber in a streptavidin-mediated reaction to slide-attached PEG-biotin
648 as described previously (Ticau et al, 2015).
649
650 Helicase-loading, DDK, and CMG-formation reactions were performed as described above with
651 the following modifications: During CMG formation 12.5 nM RPA and 0.625 nM Mcm10 were
652 added. No high-salt wash was performed after CMG-formation reaction.
653
654 **Single-Molecule Microscopy**
655 The micro-mirror total internal reflection (TIR) microscope used for multiwavelength single-
656 molecule using excitation wavelengths 488, 532, and 633 nm as described in Friedman et al.,
657 (2006). Briefly, the chamber surface was cleaned and derivatized using a 200:1 ratio of silane-
658 NHS-PEG and silane-NHS-PEG-biotin as described in Ticau et al. (2015). Biotinylated
659 AlexaFluor488-labeled 1.2kb circular DNA molecules containing an origin were coupled to the
660 surface of a reaction chamber through streptavidin. Subsequently, Mcm2-7 loading, Mcm2-7
661 phosphorylation, and CMG-formation reactions (or DNA unwinding) were added to a chamber of
662 the microscope slide. DNA was imaged immediately after adding the CMG-formation reaction to
663 the slide but not throughout the experiment. After addition of CMG-formation proteins to Mcm2-
664 7-bound DNA, frames of 1 sec duration were acquired according to the following protocol: (1) 1
665 sec frame with the 532 nm laser on and 1 sec frame with the 633 nm laser on, and (2) a computer-
666 controlled focus-adjustment using a 785-nm laser (Crawford et al., 2008). This cycle was repeated
667 over the course of a ~30 min experiment. After ~30 min of incubation, chambers were washed

668 with four chamber volumes of buffer H supplemented with 500 mM NaCl and one chamber
669 volume of buffer H supplemented with 300 mM of KGlut. Recording of protein photobleaching
670 was then performed as described in Ticau et al. (2015).
671
672 **Single-molecule data analysis**
673 Analysis of the CoSMoS data sets was as described in Ticau et al. (2015). Records of protein
674 single-molecule fluorescence were corrected for background fluorescence as follows: One set of
675 intensity time records summed intensities of 5 × 5 pixel areas centered on the DNA molecule
676 locations ($D_j(m)$ records for integrated intensity from the mth frame for the jth DNA molecule
677 area). Additional time records similarly recorded time-smoothed background intensity levels from
678 areas adjacent to each DNA molecule location ($B_j(m)$ background records for the jth DNA
679 molecule) and the time-smoothed background offset record for the camera with no light incident
680 ($C(m)$ record). Background-corrected fluorescence intensity records were calculated as $D_j(m) -$
681 $B_j(m)$.
682
683 **Intensity histogram fitting**
684 Background fluorescence (solution dye + slide autofluorescence) results in a ($B_j(m) - C(m)$) value
685 that is proportional to the local laser excitation at the jth DNA site. One DNA site record was
686 chosen as having a reference level of laser excitation ($B_R(m) - C(m)$), and the time record for all
687 other DNA sites were background-corrected and normalized to correspond to the laser excitation
688 at that reference j=R site. Accordingly, this background-corrected normalized time record $N_j(m)$
689 for each DNA site is
690

691 $$N_j(m) = \left(D_j(m) - B_j(m)\right) \frac{(B_R(m) - C(m))}{(B_j(m) - C(m))}$$

692

693 Using a noise (variance) vs. (signal mean) measurement we determined the calibration factor k,
694 the number of photons corresponding to one digitized intensity unit (analog-to-digital unit, ADU)
695 ($k = 0.0118$ photons/ADU) (Friedman et al., 2006). From the recording of each experiment, we
696 defined $g = \langle(B_R(m) - C(m))\rangle k$, the mean value (in photons) of the reference DNA site
697 background intensity averaged over all frames for that experiment.

698

699 The intensity data $N_j(m)$ from $j = 200$ to 400 DNA locations over $m = 600$ time points (1500 s
700 recording duration) were pooled for intensity distribution analysis of N. Outlier measurements
701 with N values > 50,000 ADU (in all experiments less than 5% of measurements) were excluded
702 from histograms and fits.

703

704 The distributions of corrected intensities N from each experiment were fit to a modified Binomial-
705 distributed Gaussian mixture model probability density function

706 $$p(N) = \sum_{i=0}^{n} \left\{ \frac{P_i'}{\sigma_i \sqrt{2\pi}} \exp\left(-\frac{1}{2} \left[\frac{N - is}{\sigma_i} \right]^2 \right) \right\}$$

707 with the normalized amplitudes

708 $$P_i' = P_i \Big/ \sum_{i=0}^{n} P_i$$

709 derived from the modified Binomial distribution

710 $$P_i = \begin{cases} q + \binom{n}{i} \lambda^i (1-\lambda)^{n-i} & i = 0 \\ \binom{n}{i} \lambda^i (1-\lambda)^{n-i} & i > 0 \end{cases}$$

711 and the component widths

712 $$\sigma_i = \sqrt{\left(\frac{\sqrt{g + isk}}{k}\right)^2 + (xi)^2}$$

713

714 with fit parameters q, s, λ, and x. The number of components was held fixed at $n = 8$ although
715 component numbers for $i > 6$ did not contribute significantly to the probability density function
716 ($P_i' < 0.01$) in any of the data sets analyzed (Supplementary file 1- table 1 and Supplementary file
717 2 - table 1). In this model q is an additional amplitude in the zeroth peak to account for target
718 molecules incapable of binding labeled protein; s is the corrected intensity (expressed in ADU)
719 corresponding to a single dye molecule; $n\lambda$ is the mean number of dye molecules per binding-
720 competent Mcm2-7-bound DNA; and x is additional variation in fluorescent spot intensity
721 (expressed in ADU) presumed to arise from DNA Brownian motion. Fit parameters were
722 determined by maximizing the likelihood using customized Matlab software (in
723 https://github.com/gelles-brandeis/jganalyze).

724

725 **Bulk CMG-formation assay**

726 Ensemble CMG-formation assays were performed as described in Champasa et al. (2019).

727

728 **Phosphorylation assays on SuperSep™ Phos-tag™ gels**

729 Each incubation step was performed in a thermomixer (Eppendorf) with shaking at 1250 rpm at
730 25℃. The DNA template was the same used in CMG-formation assays as described in Champasa
731 et al. (2019). Helicase loading reactions contained 100 nM Mcm2-7, 45 nM ORC and 45 nM Cdc6.
732 After loading, DDK was added at varying concentrations (0 nM, 20 nM, 80 nM, 120 nM, 260 nM

733 and 500 nM) for 20 min. The supernatant was removed by applying the reaction to a DynaMag-2
734 magnet (ThermoFisher Scientific). Reactions were washed with buffer H, 300 mM KCl, and 0.01%
735 NP-40 three times. Proteins were released from the DNA by incubation with 5 U of DNA I
736 (Worthington) in 10 mL of 25 mM HEPES-KOH (pH 7.6), 5 mM MgOAc, 200 mM NaCl, 5%
737 glycerol, 0.02% NP-40, and 2 mM $CaCl_2$ for 20 min at 25℃ before running on a pre-cast 10 %
738 SuperSep™ Phos-tag™ gel at 25 mA for >2hrs. The gels were then stained using Krypton™
739 Protein Stain (ThermoFisher Scientific).
740
741 When Mcm4 tail-SNAP protein was used, then 500 nM of protein was phosphorylated with
742 varying concentrations of DDK (0 nM, 20 nM, 80 nM, 120 nM, 260 nM and 500 nM) for 20 min.
743 Reactions were run on a pre-cast 10 % SuperSep™ Phos-tag™ gel at 25 mA for >2hrs. The gels
744 were then stained using Krypton™ Protein Stain (ThermoFisher Scientific).
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Supplementary information

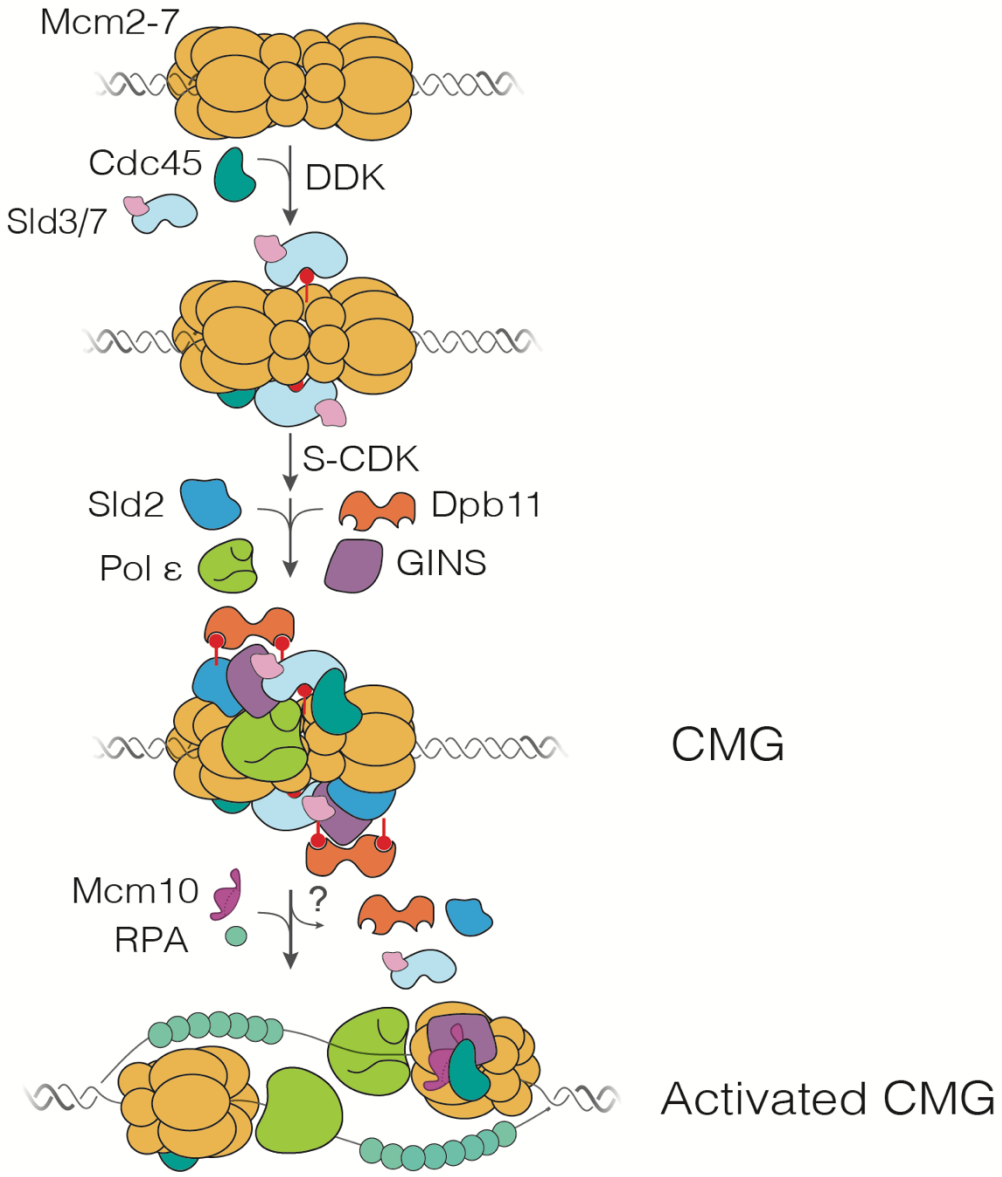

Figure 1–figure supplement 1. Schematic representation of DNA replication initiation. Scheme shows the first time that each factor is required.

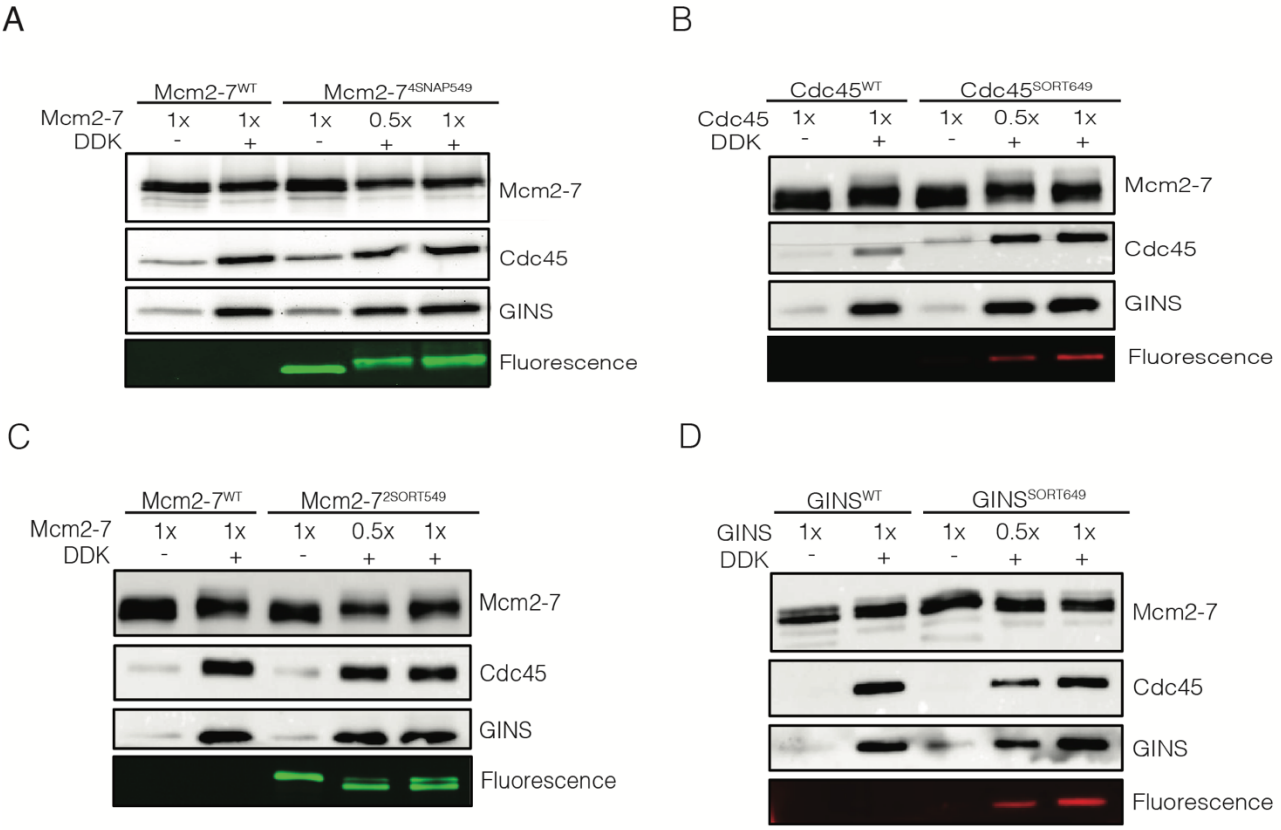

Figure 1–figure supplement 2. Fluorescently-labeled proteins function at wild-type levels in ensemble CMG-formation assays. Mcm2-7 was loaded onto bead-coupled 3.8-kb plasmids and subsequently phosphorylated with DDK. The phosphorylation reaction mix was removed without washing the beads prior to addition of helicase-activation proteins. Beads were washed with high-salt buffer, and Mcm2-7 proteins, Cdc45 and GINS were detected by immunoblot. Omission of DDK was used as a control for non-specific DNA binding of Cdc45 and GINS. **(A)** Mcm2-7^{4SNAP549} did not hinder Mcm2-7 loading or Cdc45/GINS recruitment. **(B)** Cdc45^{SORT649} did not hinder Cdc45 or GINS recruitment to CMG. **(C)** Mcm2-7^{2SORT549} did not hinder Mcm2-7 loading or Cdc45/GINS recruitment. **(D)** GINS^{SORT649} did not hinder Cdc45 or GINS recruitment to CMG.

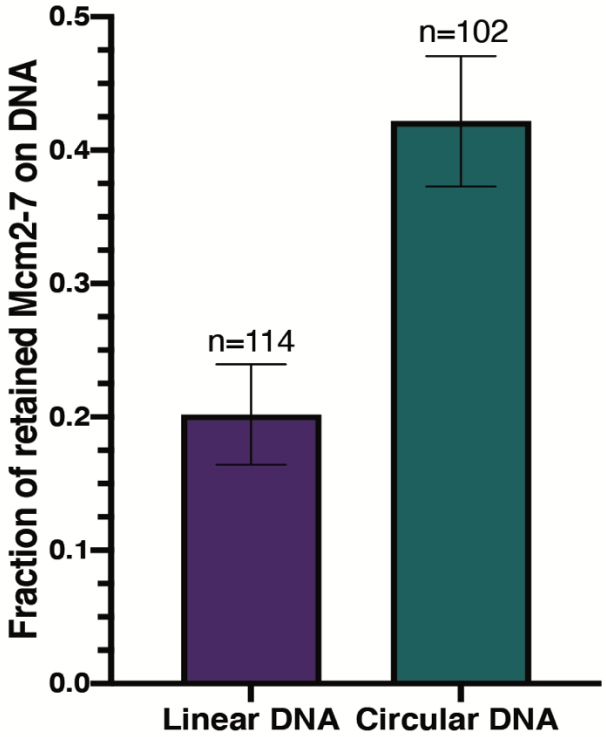

Figure 1–figure supplement 3. Circular DNA results in a higher number of retained Mcm2-7 during helicase loading. Bar graphs indicate the fraction (± SE) of n DNA molecules with retained Mcm2-7 during helicase loading. Origin-containing linear (purple) and circular (green) DNA are plotted.

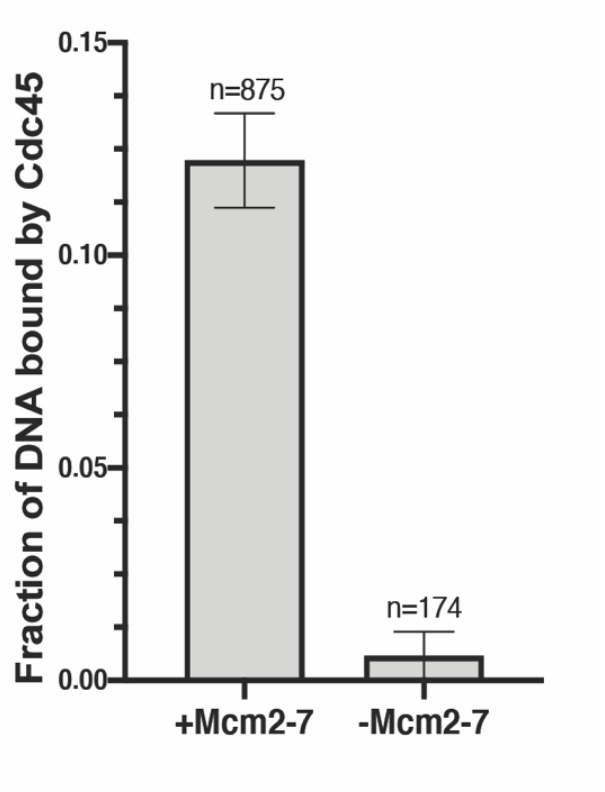

Figure 1–figure supplement 4. Cdc45 binds DNA in a Mcm2-7-dependent manner. The fraction of n (± SE) DNA molecules with bound $Cdc45^{SORT649}$ after a HSW2 high-salt wash is plotted. Cdc6 was omitted from the −Mcm2-7 reaction (right bar).

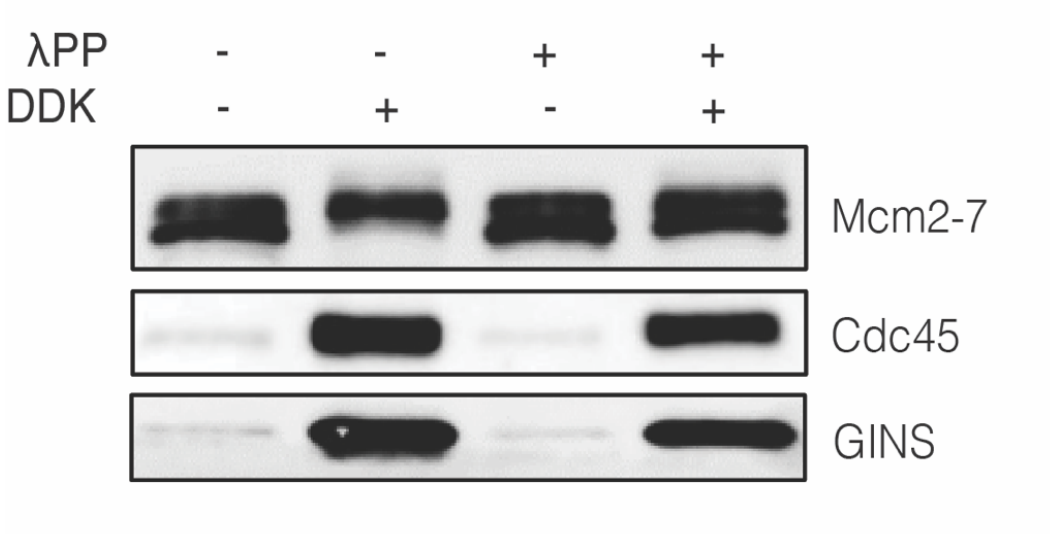

Figure 1–figure supplement 5. Phosphatase-treated Mcm2-7 remains functional after treatment with phosphatase. Ensemble CMG-formation assays were performed as described in Materials and Methods. Immunoblots for Mcm2-7, Cdc45 and GINS after HSW2 are shown.

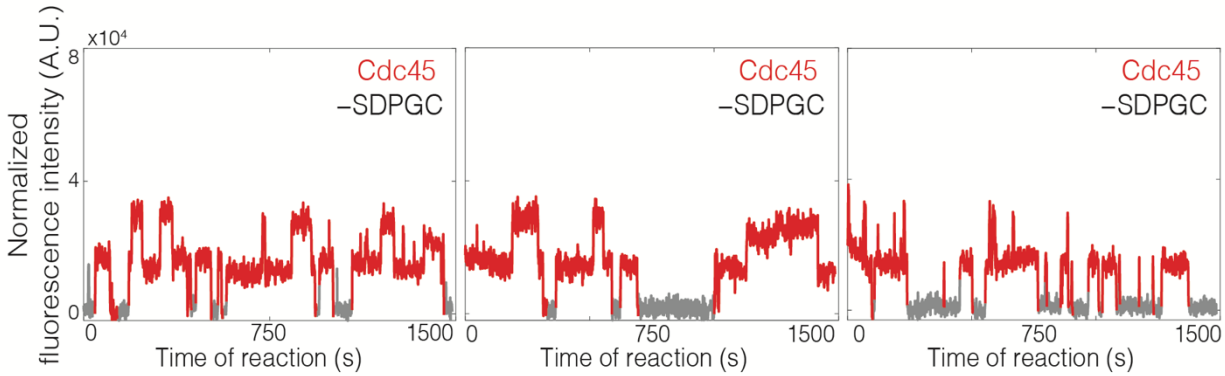

Figure 2–figure supplement 1. Representative records of Cdc45^{SORT649} fluorescence. Additional example traces of Cdc45^{SORT649} from the experiment shown in Figure 2A. Cdc45 recruitment reactions including Sld3/7 but without Sld2, Dpb11, Pol e, GINS, and S-CDK (SDPGC). Points colored as in Figure 2B.

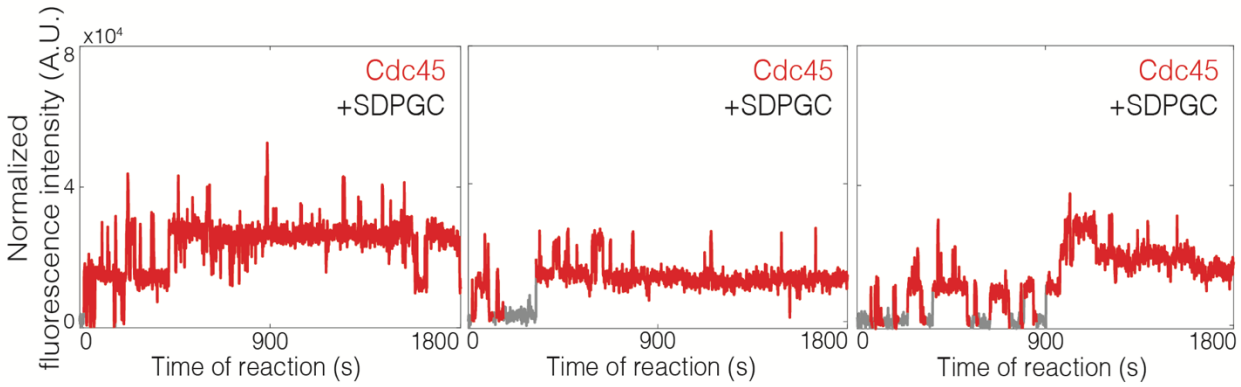

Figure 2–figure supplement 2. Representative traces of Cdc45^{SORT649} fluorescence. Additional example traces of Cdc45^{SORT649} from the experiment shown in Figure 2B. Cdc45 recruitment reactions including Sld3/7 in the presence of Sld2, Dpb11, Pol ε, GINS, and S-CDK (SDPGC). Points colored as in Figure 2B.

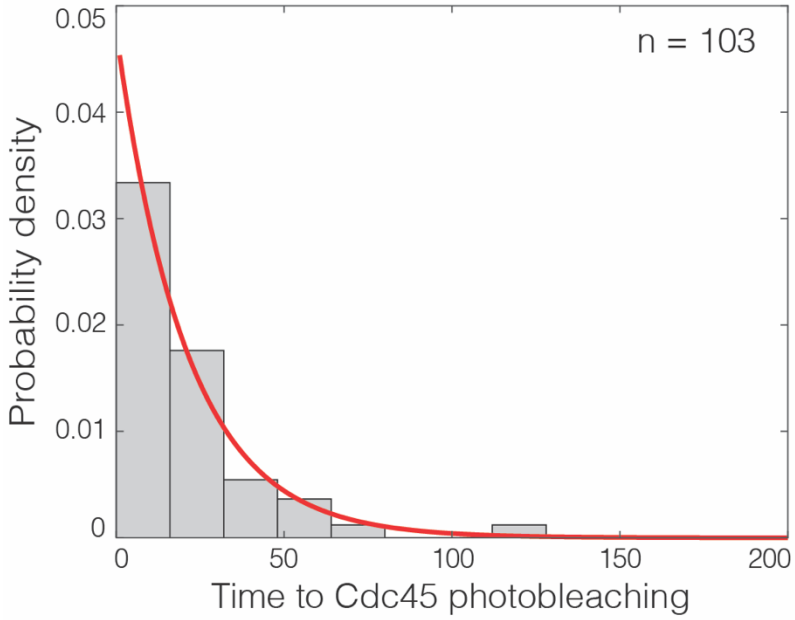

Figure 3–figure supplement 1. Photobleaching Cdc45^{SORT649} events are temporally resolved. Distribution of time intervals until photobleaching for Cdc45^{SORT649} bound to DNA with loaded Mcm2-7 prepared at 6.5 nM DDK, as exemplified by the lower-right record in Figure 3B. For records that showed two separate photobleaching steps, the interval was taken to be the time from the first to the second bleaching step. Exponential fit (line) yielded time constant $\tau = 21$ s. This implies that only a small fraction (less than $\exp(-3\,\tau\,\Delta t) = 7\%$) of sequential photobleaching steps were mistakenly counted as one rather than two steps, based on the conservative assumption all steps separated by three or more $\Delta t = 2.6$ s video frame intervals were resolved.

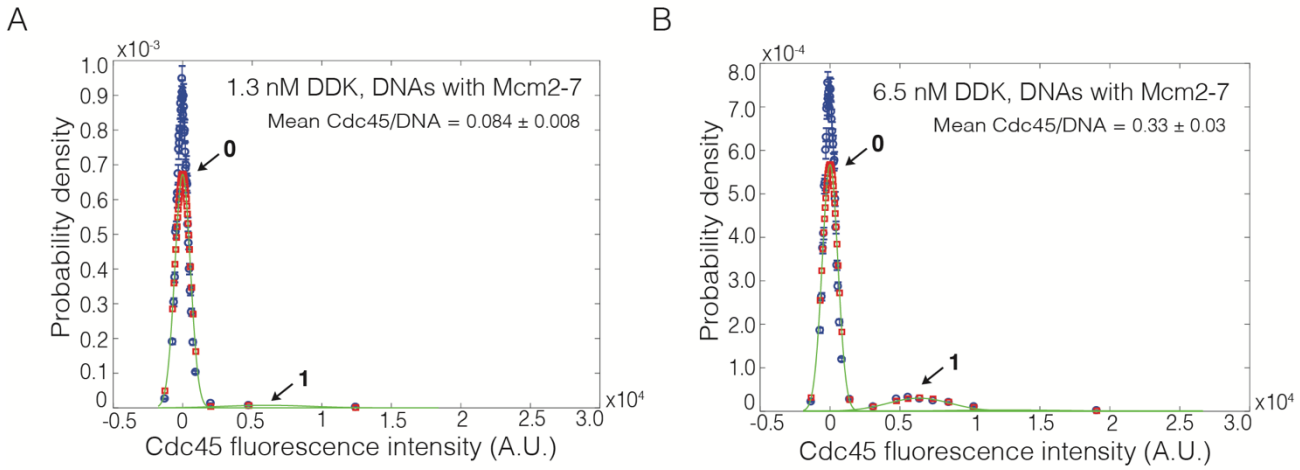

Figure 4–figure supplement 1. Reducing fraction of labeled Cdc45 results in detection of individual binding events. (A and B) CMG formation assays were performed with 3.6% of Cdc45 molecules being fluorescently labeled. $Cdc45^{SORT649}$ fluorescence-intensity histograms (blue) are shown. The histogram data were fit to a sum-of-Gaussians model (red; see Materials and Methods). Fit parameters and calculated area fractions of individual Gaussian components (green) corresponding to the presence of the indicated numbers of $Cdc45^{SORT649}$ molecules are given in Supplementary file 1 - table 1. The mean (± SE) numbers of Cdc45 molecules per DNA calculated from the fit parameters and the fraction Cdc45 labeled are indicated. **(A)** Reactions with 1.3 nM DDK on Mcm2-7-bound DNA molecules. **(B)** Reactions with 6.5 nM DDK on Mcm2-7-bound DNA molecules.

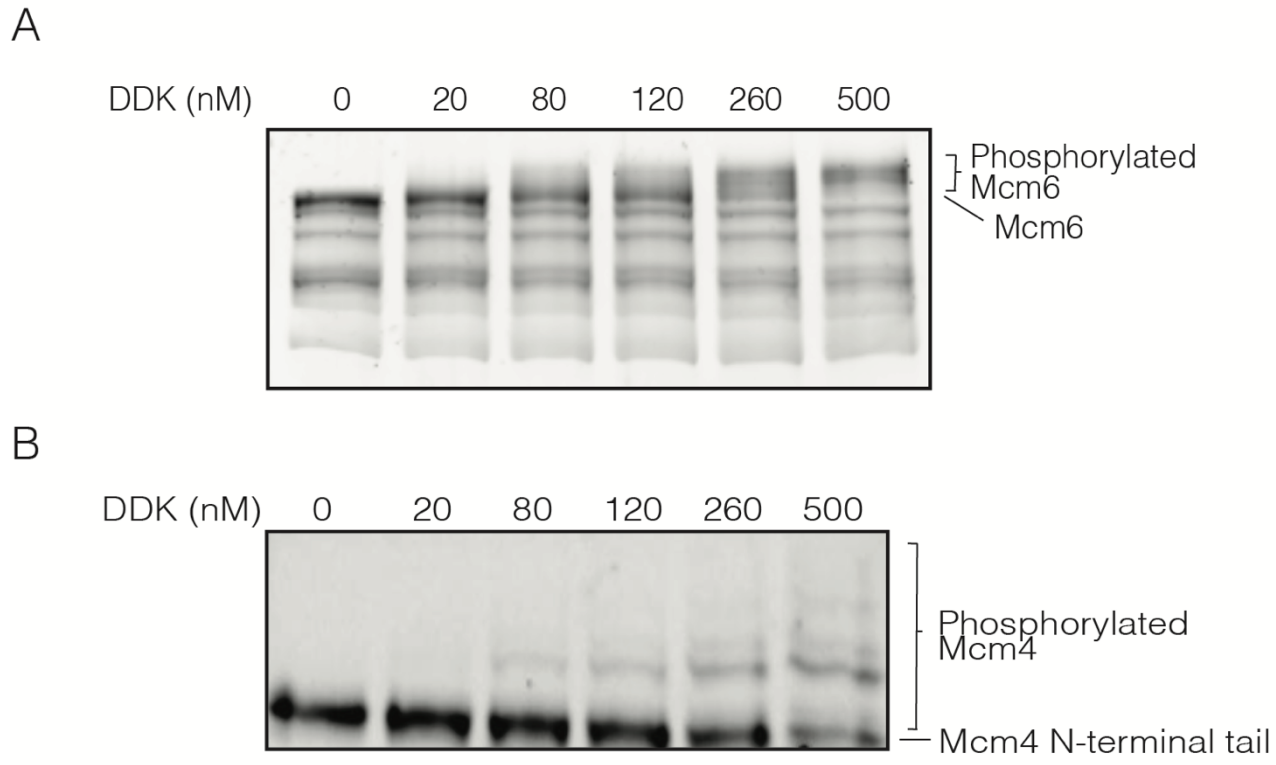

Figure 4–figure supplement 2. Higher DDK concentrations results in higher numbers of phosphorylation events on Mcm6 and Mcm4. (A) Phosphorylation of loaded WT Mcm2-7 with increasing concentrations of DDK. After loading onto DNA beads, Mcm2-7 complexes were phosphorylated with the indicated concentrations of DDK. Phosphorylated Mcm2-7 was separated on a 10% SuperSep™ Phos-tag™ gel and stained with Krypton™ Protein Stain to separate Mcm2-7 subunits with different numbers of phosphorylation sites. **(B)** Phosphorylation of Mcm4-N-terminal tail with increasing concentrations of DDK. Phosphorylated Mcm2-7 was separated on a 10% SuperSep™ Phos-tag™ gel and stained with Krypton™ Protein Stain.

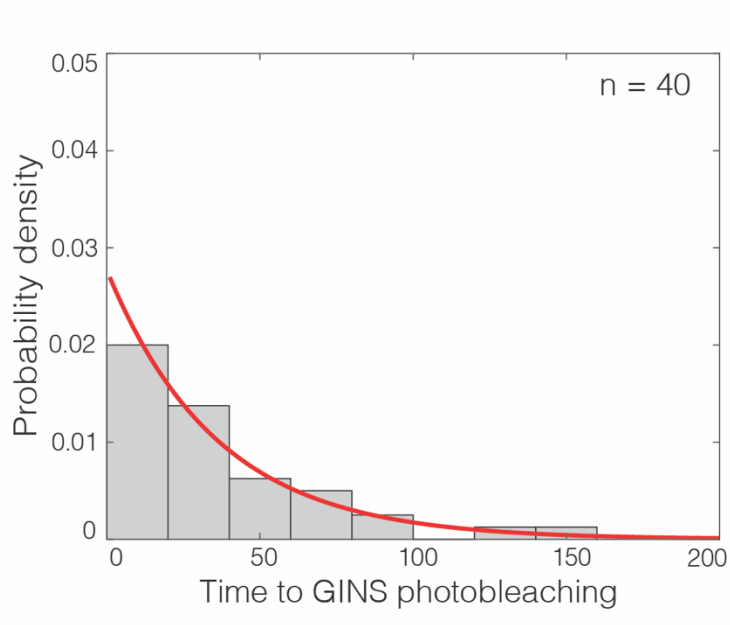

Figure 5–figure supplement 1. Photobleaching GINS^{SORT649} events are temporally resolved. Distribution of time intervals until photobleaching for GINS^{SORT649} bound to DNA with loaded Mcm2-7 prepared at 6.5 nM DDK, as exemplified by the lower-right record in Figure 5B. For records that showed two separate photobleaching steps, the interval was taken to be the time from the first to the second bleaching step. Exponential fit (line) yielded time constant $\tau = 36$ s. This implies that only a small fraction (less than $\exp(-\tau / (3\Delta t)) = 1\%$) of sequential photobleaching steps were mistakenly counted as one rather than two steps, based on the conservative assumption that all steps separated by three or more $\Delta t = 2.6$ s video frame intervals were resolved.

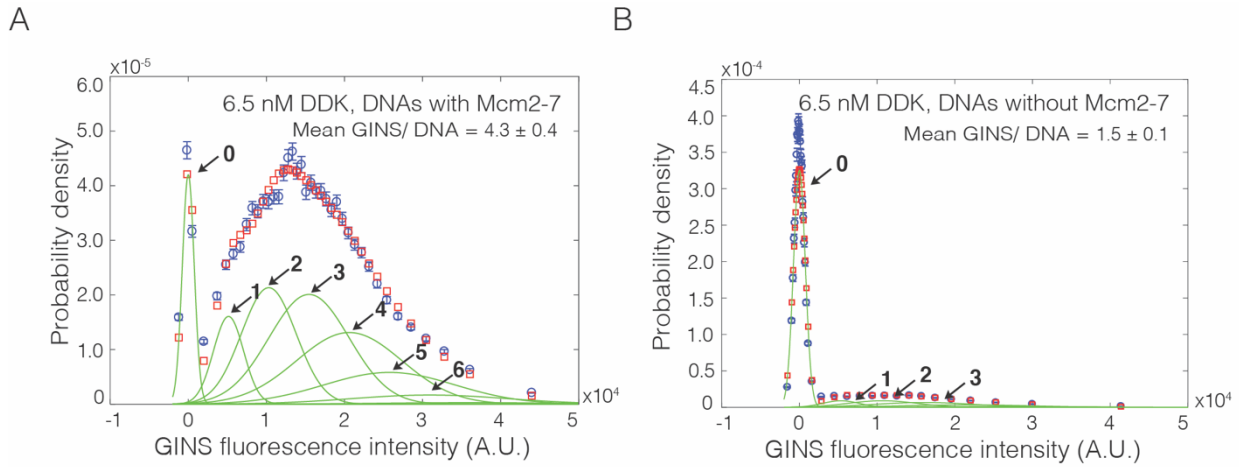

Figure 5–figure supplement 2. Mcm2-7^{2SORT549} dependence of GINS^{SORT649} binding. GINS^{SORT649} fluorescence-intensity histograms (blue) from the same recording on **(A)** Mcm2-7^{2SORT549}-bound DNA (same data as Figure 5C – panel ii), and **(B)** DNA molecules without bound Mcm2-7^{2SORT549}. The histogram data were fit to a sum-of-Gaussians model (red; see Materials and Methods). Fit parameters and calculated area fractions of individual Gaussian components (green) corresponding to the presence of the indicated numbers of GINS^{SORT649} molecules are given in Supplementary file 2 - table 1. The mean (± SE) numbers of GINS molecules per DNA calculated from the fit parameters and the fraction GINS labeled are indicated. Data in panel B may overestimate the amount of Mcm2-7-independent GINS binding because of the possible presence of a subpopulation of unlabeled Mcm2-7.

Supplementary file 1–table 1. Parameters used for fitting of Cdc45 fluorescence-intensity histograms.

	Fit parameters[b] [90% CI]				Fraction of time that DNAs with loaded Mcm2-7^{4SNAP549} were bound by this number of Cdc45^{SORT649} molecules (± SE) [f]						
Condition (Figure)	***q***	***s*** **(× 10^{-3})**	**λ**	***x*** **(× 10^{-3})**	**0**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**n**
Cdc45, 1.3 nM DDK, –SDPGC (Figure 2C – panel i) [a]	0.69 [0.66, 0.72]	13.41 [13.36, 13.49]	0.092 [0.090, 0.094]	4.12 [4.03, 4.21]	0.682 (± 0.001)	0.222 (± 0.002)	0.079 (± 0.001)	0.0159 (± 0.0004)	-	-	78
Cdc45, 1.3 nM DDK, +SDPGC (Figure 2C – panel ii) [a]	0.31 [0.29, 0.32]	10.10 [10.95, 11.05]	0.101 [0.010, 0.103]	4.19 [4.16, 4.23]	0.560 (± 0.001)	0.294 (± 0.001)	0.116 (± 0.001)	0.0262 (± 0.0004)	-	-	131
Cdc45, 1.3 nM DDK, +SDPGC (Figure 3C – panel i) [q]	0.33 [0.30,0.38]	6.13 [6.00, 6.28]	0.123 [0.116, 0.129]	2.78 [2.69, 2.86]	0.512 (± 0.004)	0.295 (± 0.009)	0.144 (± 0.004)	0.040 (± 0.003)	-	-	48
Cdc45, 6.5 nM DDK, +SDPGC (Figure 3C – panel ii) [q]	0.346 [0.340, 0.353]	5.79 [5.74, 5.84]	0.310 [0.306, 0.314]	2.10 [2.07, 2.12]	0.295 (± 0.001)	0.137 (± 0.004)	0.216 (± 0.004)	0.194 (± 0.002)	0.109 (± 0.002)	0.039 (± 0.001)	87
Cdc45, 6.5 nM DDK, +SDPGC, -Sld3/7 (Figure 3 – panel iii) [q]	7 [4, 10]	4.54 [4.39, 4.67]	0.02 [0.01, 0.03]	0.73 [0.60, 0.88]	0.982 (± 0.001)	0.017 (± 0.001)	-	-	-	-	32
1:20 Cdc45, 1.3 nM DDK, +SDPGC (Figure 4 – supp 1) [q]	-0.96 [-0.98, -0.57]	6.20 [6.16, 6.25]	0.0003 [0.0001*, 0.0033]	3.12 [3.03, 3.18]	0.934 (± 0.001)	0.059 (± 0.001)	-	-	-	-	56
1:20 Cdc45, 6.5 nM DDK, +SDPGC (Figure 4 – supp 1) [q]	0.6 [0.4, 0.8]	6.37 [6.27, 6.49]	0.048 [0.042, 0.055]	2.05 [1.94, 2.18]	0.797 (± 0.002)	0.169 (± 0.003)	0.030 (± 0.002)	-	-	-	64
Cdc45, 6.5 nM DDK, +SDPGC, Mcm2-7$^{\Delta 6N}$ (Figure 6C) [q]	0.8 [0.3, 0.9]	7.85 [7.56, 7.89]	0.017 [0.012, 0.019]	4.628 [4.485, 4.632]	0.925 (± 0.003)	0.064 (± 0.004)	0.010 (± 0.003)	-	-	-	89

[a]Simultaneous 546 nm laser excitation and 633 nm laser excitation.
[b]See Materials and Methods
[q]1-sec 546 nm laser excitation followed by 1-sec 633 nm laser excitation.
[f]Values less than 1% were omitted.
*Lower confidence interval uncertain because of minimal binding in this experiment.

Supplementary file 2–table 1. Parameters used for fitting of GINS fluorescence-intensity histograms.

	Fit parameters [b] [90% CI]				Fraction of time that DNAs with loaded Mcm2-7^{4SNAP549} were bound by this number of GINS^{SORT649} molecules (± SE) [f]							
Condition (Figure)	***q***	***s*** **(× 10^{-3})**	**λ**	***x*** **(× 10^{-3})**	**0**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**n**
GINS, 1.3 nM DDK, +SDPGC, On Mcm2-7 (Figure 5C – panel i) [q]	0.68 [0.56, 0.70]	6.11 [6.06, 6.15]	0.270 [0.231, 0.273]	2.33 [2.29, 3.01]	0.45 (± 0.01)	0.14 (± 0.02)	0.183 (± 0.006)	0.136 (± 0.006)	0.063 (± 0.006)	0.019 (± 0.003)	-	84
GINS, 6.5 nM DDK, +SDPGC, On Mcm2-7 (Figure 5C – panel ii) [q]	0.071 [0.070, 0.073]	5.15 [5.05, 5.24]	0.41 [0.40, 0.42]	1.65 [1.62, 1.67]	0.080 (± 0.002)	0.078 (± 0.004)	0.188 (± 0.005)	0.258 (± 0.002)	0.222 (± 0.003)	0.123 (± 0.004)	0.042 (± 0.002)	57
GINS, 6.5 nM DDK, +SDPGC, On Mcm2-7, –Sld3/7 (Figure 5C – panel iii) [q]	1.35 [1.31, 1.39]	4.94 [4.88, 5.01]	0.155 [0.152, 0.159]	2.25 [2.20, 2.30]	0.684 (± 0.003)	0.162 (± 0.002)	0.105 (± 0.001)	0.038 (± 0.001)	-	-	-	49
GINS, 6.5 nM DDK, +SDPGC, On Mcm2-7, –Cdc45 (Figure 5C – panel iv) [q]	1.60 [1.59, 1.61	5.67 [5.62, 5.71]	0.264 [0.262, 0.265]	3.31 [3.30, 3.32]	0.648 (± 0.001)	0.095 (± 0.002)	0.086 (± 0.001)	0.039 (± 0.001)	0.0110 (± 0.0003)	-	-	107
GINS, 6.5 nM DDK, +SDPGC, Non-Mcm2-7 (Figure 5 – supp 2) [q]	1.55 [1.53, 1.58]	5.35 [5.27, 5.42]	0.351 [0.346, 0.357]	2.13 [2.10, 2.16]	0.621 (± 0.002)	0.053 (± 0.001)	0.101 (± 0.001)	0.109 (± 0.001)	0.074 (± 0.001)	0.032 (± 0.001)	-	84

[b]See Materials and Methods
[q]1-sec 546 nm laser excitation followed by 1-sec 643 nm laser excitation.
[f]Values less than 1% were omitted.

Supplementary file 3–table 1. Yeast strains

Strains	Genotype	Source
yCKR006	his3::pSKM004 (GAL1,10-MCM2,Flag-MCM3), ura::pALS1 (GAL1,10-Cdt1, GAL4), lys::pST022 (GAL1,10-MCM4-SNAP, MCM5), trp::pCKR006 (GAL1,10-MCM6del, MCM7	This study
yMM034	ade2-1, trp1-1, leu2-3,112, his3-11,15 ura3-1, can1-100, Delta-bar1, lys2:: HisG, pep4:: unmarked, LEU:: (Cdc45-3xFlag-LPETGG)	This study
yST179	yMH09 trp::pSKM003 (GAL1,10-MCM6,MCM7), ura::pALS1 (GAL1,10-Cdt1,GAL4), his::pST036 (GAL1,10-SORT-MCM2,Flag-MCM3), lys2::pSKM002 (GAL1,10-MCM4, MCM5)	Ticau et al., 2017
yST147	yMH09 trp1::pSKM003 (GAL1,10-MCM6,MCM7), his::pSKM004 (GAL1,10-MCM2,Flag-MCM3), lys2::pST022 (GAL1,10-fSNAP-MCM4, MCM5), ura::pALS1 (GAL1,10-Cdt1, GAL4)	Ticau et al., 2017

Supplementary file 3–table 2. Plasmids

Plasmids	Description	Source
pCKR006	pSK003 (GAL1,10-MCM6del, MCM7)	This study
pMM032	pMM033 (Cdc45-3xFlag-LPETGG)	This study
pLD01	pFJD5 (6XHIS-PreScission Protease site -Psf3 -LPETGG)	This study