

Pap Smears

Conventional Pap

The Pap smear is primarily for detection of cervical premalignant and malignant changes and should not be relied upon to detect endometrial malignancy.

NOTE: The pap test is a screening test for cervical cancer with inherent false negative results.

Specimen Collection: A spatula and cytobrush are a very effective sampling combination. Collect with a spatula first, followed by the cytobrush.



Ectocervical/Endocervical Scraping—The scraping of the ectocervix/endocervix is the single most productive sample and should be taken so as to sample the entire squamocolumnar junction.

Spatula—Used for scraping of the ectocervix.

Cytobrush—It has been shown that the cytobrush provides a superior sample from the endocervical canal as compared to swab. The brush should be used according to the instructions and should not be used on pregnant patients or to sample the endometrium. The brush specimen should be in addition to, never instead of, the ectocervical scraping.

- Labeling Slides:** The patient's first and last name should be written in pencil on the frosted end of the slide. It is helpful if the site is indicated (e.g., "C" for cervix, "F" for endocervical, "V" for vagina).
- Smears:** Smears should be made with one or two swipes of the spatula on the slide, not with a mixing motion. The cytobrush should be rolled on the slide.
- The smear should be obtained about midcycle, or about day 14, from a woman of childbearing age.
The smear should be obtained before the bimanual exam, using warm water to lubricate the speculum. Excess mucus or blood should be wiped away from the cervix before obtaining the smear.
- Fixation:** Rapid fixation is critical for good quality smears. The smears should be fixed immediately to avoid air-drying. If an aerosol spray is used, the spray nozzle should be about twelve inches from the slide. (If held too close, the spray "freezes" the cells and also lifts them from the slide, causing them to clump.) If a pump spray is used, the pump should be worked until a fine spray is obtained so that large droplets do not hit the slide and cause cells to clump.
- Requisition Form:** Complete all patient information fields including Social Security number (which is used for identification purposes). It is important that clinical information also be given, as it is very helpful in the interpretation of the specimen. Clinical information should include:
- Patient's First and Last Name
 - Date of birth
 - LMP (last menstrual period)
 - Hormonal status (e.g., post partum, post menopausal, etc.)
 - Hormonal therapy (including birth control pills) Other therapy (e.g., cautery)
 - Any history of prior abnormal Pap smears
 - Specimen Source
 - Collection Date
- Transport:** Transport fixed specimens to the laboratory.