

PAP TEST COLLECTION GUIDELINES FOR CYTOLOGIC EXAMINATION



Acceptable specimens for the Pap Test include cervical, cervical and vaginal, endocervical, vaginal and/or vulvar scrapings or brushings. Specimens may be submitted as conventional smears, although the preferred method is the ThinPrep® Pap test. The quality of your test results depends upon proper collection, preparation and transport of the specimen according to the published criteria. In the event a specimen does not meet standards for quality laboratory testing, Michigan Medicine Laboratories (MLabs) may need to cancel the order and will notify you of such cancellation.

Specimen Labeling

All conventional Pap smear slides and ThinPrep® Pap test vials must be clearly labeled with the patient's first and last names as well as a second identifier such as the patient's Birthdate or Medical Record Number. Label conventional slides on the frosted end using a graphite pencil (NOT a pen, marker, wax pencil or crayon). A completed [MLabs Surgical / Cytopathology Requisition](#) or electronic order must accompany each specimen.

Patient Clinical History

To ensure thorough and complete interpretations, please include pertinent clinical history on the requisition form as follows:

- Specimen source
- Birthdate
- Date of last menstrual period (LMP)
- Whether patient is pregnant or post partum
- Presence of an IUD
- Abnormal cervix
- Previous gynecological surgery and procedures
- Previous abnormal Pap smear(s) (specify previous abnormality)
- Current hormonal therapy
- Chemotherapy
- Radiation therapy
- Past or present history of cancer
- Any other relevant clinical history such as abnormal bleeding

Specimen Collection

Instruct patient to avoid douching 24-48 hours before examination. Avoid collection of samples during a patient's menstrual period. If patient has had a hysterectomy, submit smear from vaginal apex.

ThinPrep® Pap Test: Label a ThinPrep® vial with the patient's last name, first name and medical record number (or other second unique patient identifier). Scrape the cervix circumferentially at squamocolumnar junction with a plastic spatula. Remove and rinse the spatula as quickly as possible into the ThinPrep® vial by swirling it vigorously 10 times in the solution. Discard the spatula. Gently insert the cytobrush into the cervical os until only the bottom-most fibers are exposed. Slowly rotate ¼ or ½ turn in one direction. Do not over-rotate. Remove the brush and rinse in the ThinPrep® vial by rotating the brush in the solution 10 times while also pushing against the vial wall. Swirl the brush vigorously to further release the material. Discard the brush; do not leave the brush in the vial. Store the sample at room temperature.

Conventional Pap Smear: Cervical scrape and brushing is recommended. Except for evaluation of maturation index and detection of vaginal adenosis, submit only one slide. For routine Pap tests, both the scraping of the squamocolumnar junction and endocervical brushing should be spread onto the same slide.

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Label the glass slide with the patient's last name, first name and medical record number (or date of birth) using a graphite pencil (do not use ink, wax or crayon). Gently remove excessive secretion or blood at the cervical os with cotton swab and discard. Scrape the ectocervix circumferentially with a cervical spatula at the squamocolumnar junction and spread the material evenly onto one half of the labeled slide. Gently insert an endocervical brush into the cervical os. Rotate, then remove the brush and spread material evenly on the other half of the slide. It does not matter if the two samples mix together. Fix the slide immediately with spray fixative. Allow spray-fixed slide to dry completely and place into a slide holder. Submit with a completed [MLabs Surgical / Cytopathology Requisition](#), including pertinent patient history.

VAGINAL SAMPLE

Obtain the cervical sample as described above. Before fixing, obtain a vaginal scraping from the posterior fornix with a cervical spatula. For patients that have had a hysterectomy, collect a sample from the vaginal apex; and place the sample directly into the ThinPrep® vial. If submitting on a glass slide, spread the material on a labeled slide and spray fix immediately.

Vulvar or Vaginal Lesion Sample: Collect sample directly from the lesion and submit as indicated above.

VAGINAL ADENOSIS

Collect a scraping from each quadrant of the upper vagina and submit each in a separate vial (or slide) and separately from cervical samples. Vaginal specimens should be collected before cervical samples are obtained and the area to be sampled is first swabbed to remove any contaminating secretion from the cervix.

HPV TESTING

Specimens submitted in the ThinPrep® Pap test vial are acceptable for HPV testing. If both tests are requested, residual ThinPrep® Pap specimen will be submitted to the Virology laboratory for HPV testing. Residual ThinPrep® Pap specimens are held for a minimum of 42 days for add-on HPV testing. There is an additional charge for HPV testing.

Unsatisfactory Results

The following conditions may render a Pap test unsatisfactory or interfere with cytologic examination:

- Improper fixation or drying of a smear before fixation
- Failure to obtain adequate cellular sample
- Excessive use of lubricating jelly on the vaginal speculum
- Excessive mucus, blood, or purulent exudate
- An inflammatory reaction may invalidate hormonal evaluation

Reasons for rejection of specimens include:

- Improper labeling of specimen container or requisition
- Incomplete or missing requisition
- Prepared slides received broken beyond repair (for conventional Pap smears)

Submission of Specimens to the MLabs Cytopathology Laboratory

Conventional Pap smears: Flat cardboard slide holders do not adequately protect slides from breakage. For mailing or transporting slides in flat folders, please double package in a mailing container.

ThinPrep® Pap test vials: Close the vial cap tightly, and place the vial into a specimen biohazard bag.

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Submit the sample along with a completed [MLabs Surgical / Cytopathology Requisition](#). Specimens can be sent via express mail or courier service to:

Michigan Medicine Laboratories
Department of Pathology – Specimen Processing
UH 2F361
1500 E. Medical Center Drive
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-5054

Questions

Call **800.862.7284** or mlabs.umich.edu