

Unsatisfactory / inadequate cytology results

1. Common reasons for unsatisfactory cytology results

- Scant cellularity (most common)
 - Entire cervix not visualised (if cervix present)
 - Smear test repeated too soon (less than 3-month interval)
 - Cervix swabbed prior to test being taken
 - Presence of foreign material (e.g., lubricant)
 - Obscuring inflammation
 - Obscuring blood
 - Excessive cytolysis or autolysis (broken cells usually caused by bacteria)
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2. Points to remember to help avoid unsatisfactory results

- Visualise the entire cervix.
 - Insert the central bristles of the broom into the endocervical canal deep enough to allow the shorter bristles to fully contact the ectocervix.
 - Using pencil pressure, rotate the broom in a clockwise direction five times.
 - Rinse the broom as quickly as possible into the PreservCyt solution vial by pushing the broom into the bottom of the vial 10 times, forcing the bristles apart. As a final step, swirl the broom vigorously to further release material.
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3. Guidelines and Reference Material

- European Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Cervical Screening - section 6.3.1: *'The cervical epithelium needs time to regenerate after cytology. Repeat cytology should not be performed less than 3 months after a previous Pap smear.'*
 - NCSS CervicalCheck - Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Cervical Screening – Second Edition, Standard 3 - 12: *'there must be a minimum of 3 months between any 2 smear tests'*.
 - NCSS CervicalCheck – Guide for Smear takers.
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