

# Appropriate use of lubricants with Cervical Screening tests

While the use of lubricant is not recommended with Liquid Based Cytology as it can adversely affect the cervical screening test result, if required, following appropriate usage recommendations is essential.

**It is important to insure that the sample collected maximises the potential of the cervical screening test.**<sup>1,2</sup>

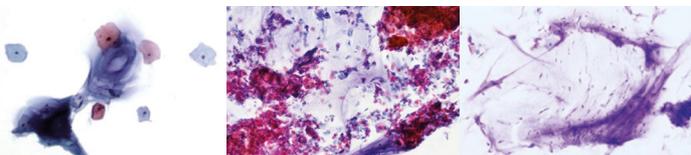
As an aid for patient comfort, lubricants are frequently used during the pelvic examination. However, usage of lubricant is not recommended, because their use can adversely affect the cervical screening test result in many ways.

**These can include:**

- Residual lubricant could interfere with the endocervical brush and spatula or cervical broom in the acquisition of cervical cells.
- Lubricants may have the potential to cause inhibition in certain molecular based tests.<sup>3</sup>

Residual lubricant could create a potential immiscible interface in alcohol based liquid Pap solutions leading to potential agglutination and cellular loss.<sup>4</sup>

**It is important to obtain a specimen that is not obscured by blood, mucus, inflammatory exudate or lubricant.**



Lubricant (amorphous purple material) obscuring cellular detail.

Lubricants containing an ingredient known as “carbomers” or “carbopol polymers” may be prone to interfere with cervical screening tests. To discuss appropriate lubricants for use in cervical screening, please contact your Medical Liaison Officer or the Cytology Department.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

Please contact your Medical Liaison Officer or the Cytology Department on **(07) 3121 4444**.

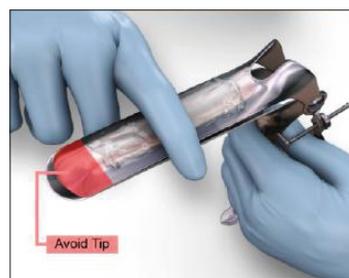
## SAMPLE COLLECTION OPTIONS FOR LUBRICATING THE SPECULUM:

**Lukewarm Water:** For a patient without physical or physiologic reasons for needing lubricant, lukewarm water may be used to warm and lubricate the speculum. This protocol has the least risk to the quality of the cervical screening sample collected.<sup>1,5</sup>

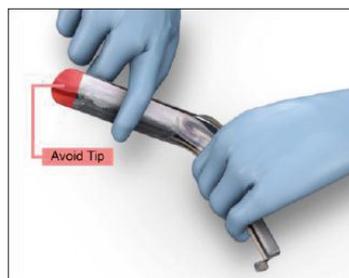
**Lubricant Gels:** If lubricant must be used due to patient discomfort or other circumstances, lubricant should be used sparingly and applied only to the exterior sides of the speculum blades, avoiding contact with the tip of the speculum.<sup>1,2,5,6</sup> (refer to diagram). When a lubricant is used sparingly and appropriately, it poses little risk to the quality of the cervical screening test sample. **However, when a lubricant is used in excess, it can adversely affect the sample.**



Apply a five cent piece-sized amount of lubricant gel.



Apply only to exterior sides of the speculum, avoiding the tip.



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## REFERENCES

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2. Amies, AE.; Miller, L; Lee, Shu-Kuang; Koutsky, L, The Effect of Vaginal Speculum Lubrication on the Rate of Unsatisfactory Cervical Cytology Diagnosis, Obstet Gynecol. 100(5, Part 1):889-892, November 2002.
3. [http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/9B758F769B58B1A8CA258107001BB2DA/\\$File/Reqs%20Cervical%20Screen%20-%2031%20May%2017.pdf/](http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/9B758F769B58B1A8CA258107001BB2DA/$File/Reqs%20Cervical%20Screen%20-%2031%20May%2017.pdf/)
4. Kalinicheva et al, "Etiologic factors related to unsatisfactory ThinPrep® cervical cytology: Evaluation and potential solutions to improve", CytoJournal 2015; 12:21.
5. "Cervicovaginal Cytology Based on the Papanicolaou Technique; Approved Guideline – Third Edition", Clinical and Laboratory Standards Institute (formerly NCCLS), Vol. 28 No. 28, 2008.
6. ACOG Practice Bulletin, Clinical Management Guidelines for Obstetrician Gynecologists, Number 109, December 2009, pg 2

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