

Cell Cycle Determination Using DAPI – PFA fixation

DAPI is commonly used in cell cycle analyses since preferentially binds dsDNA when cells are permeabilized allowing it to saturate the nucleic acids. DAPI will also bind to dsRNA, but gives emits at a longer wavelength near 500 nm.

This method may be combined with surface markers and other intracellular stains.

Required: A flow cytometer with a UV (355 nm, 375 nm) or Violet (405 nm) laser is required for DAPI analysis with detectors at 450 nm

Preparation of DAPI working solution:

- DAPI: Sigma D9542 (10 mg)
- DAPI Stock solution: Dissolve 1mg of DAPI in 1 mL in water (can be stored for several months in the dark in foil wrapped tubes at -20°C. Aliquot into 15 µL Aliquots.
- DAPI Working solution (10 µg/mL): To 15 mL 0.1% Triton X – 100 in PBS solution, add 15 µL of DAPI stock solution (prepare fresh each time).

Method:

1. Prepare cell suspensions in the normal manner for the cell line/type of interest.
2. Adjust concentrations to 1×10^6 cells/mL.
 - a. Centrifuge cells for 10 min at 1000 rpm
 - b. Aspirate supernatant using a vacuum
3. Suspend cells in 200 µL of HBSS containing 2% FBS (pipette up and down a few times if your cells readily form aggregates).
4. Stain for surface markers (see direct staining protocol).
5. Add 200 µL of a 4% PFA solution to the tubes and incubate on ice for 20 – 30 minutes.
6. Pellet cells and carefully remove supernatant (fixed cells will not sediment as tightly as live cells, take care not to aspirate to dryness or disrupt the pellet and thereby lose cells).
 - a. Wash 2X with HBSS + 2% FBS
7. Resuspend cells in 1mL of DAPI working solution
8. Incubate in the dark for 30 minutes at room temperature
9. Filter through 40 µM mesh filter
 - a. Keep cold and in the dark until ready to analyze.
10. Do not wash.

Method Notes:

Proper DNA saturation is the key to good cell cycle analysis and should not vary between samples. The variance comes from too much/too little DNA per amount of DNA intercalating/binding dye added to the sample resulting in shifting DNA content peaks i.e. G1 will not appear at the same place on the scale for each sample.

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References:

1) Invitrogen.com:

<https://catalog.invitrogen.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=viewCatalog.viewProductDetails&productDescription=3817>

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3) Tarnowski BI, Spinale FG, Nicholson JH., DAPI as a useful stain for nuclear quantitation., *Biotech Histochem.* 1991;66(6):297-302.

4) Otto F., DAPI staining of fixed cells for high-resolution flow cytometry of nuclear DNA., *Methods Cell Biol.* 1990;33:105-10.

5) Darzynkiewicz, Z. and Juan, G. 2001. DNA Content Measurement for DNA Ploidy and Cell Cycle Analysis. *Current Protocols in Cytometry.* 00:7.5:7.5.1–7.5.24.

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