

# ELISpot

## Mouse/Rat IL-6

Catalog Number EL406

**For the quantitative determination of the frequency of cells releasing mouse or rat IL-6.**

*This package insert must be read in its entirety before using this product.*

**FOR RESEARCH USE ONLY.  
NOT FOR USE IN DIAGNOSTIC PROCEDURES.**

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# INTRODUCTION

Interleukin 6 (IL-6) is a multifunctional cytokine that plays important roles in host defense, acute phase reactions, bone remodeling, and hematopoiesis (1-8). The molecule is a 22-26 kDa secreted glycoprotein that is synthesized by many cell types (1). Although it is now known as an interleukin and serves as the prototype for a family of IL-6 type cytokines (2), IL-6 was originally isolated under a variety of names, including interferon  $\beta$ 2, inducible 26 kD protein, interleukin-HP1, hepatocyte stimulating factor, and B cell stimulatory factor-2 (3). Mature mouse IL-6 is a 185 amino acid (aa) protein with four cysteine residues and two potential N-linked glycosylation sites (4, 9, 10). Although glycosylation has no effect on bioactivity (4), mouse IL-6 appears to be O-glycosylated (9, 11, 12). Mouse IL-6 shares 42% and 85% aa identity with human and rat IL-6, respectively (1, 13, 14). Whereas human IL-6 is active on both mouse and rat cells, mouse IL-6 is active on rat cells, but inactive on human cells (10). Mammalian cells known to express IL-6 include fibroblasts (15), bone marrow adipocytes (16), megakaryocytes (17), neurons (18), monocytes (19), keratinocytes (20), eosinophils and neutrophils (21), macrophages (22), renal tubular epithelial cells (23), osteoblasts (24), microglia and astrocytes (25), vascular smooth muscle cells (26), hepatocytes (27), adrenocortical cells (5), and B and T cells (28).

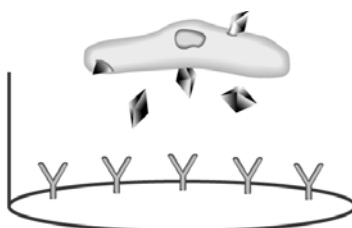
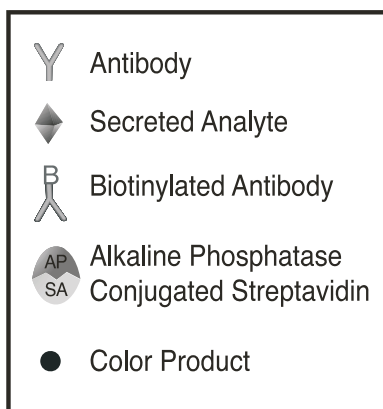
The functional IL-6 receptor complex is composed of an 80 kDa ligand-binding subunit (29), and a 130 kDa signal transducing subunit (30). The 80 kDa IL-6 receptor (IL-6R) is 449 aa in length, and is characterized by the presence of one Ig-like domain and two type III fibronectin domains in its extracellular region. IL-6 binds to IL-6R with high affinity (30). The signal transducing gp130 molecule is 896 aa in length, and extracellularly shows motifs characteristic of cytokine receptor superfamily molecules. On the cell surface, IL-6 is proposed to bind first to IL-6R, which then recruits gp130 into a trimer, which then associates with another trimer, forming a hexamer with gp130 homodimerization and subsequent signal transduction (31-34). Soluble forms of both IL-6R and gp130 have been identified in blood (35, 36). Soluble IL-6R has been shown to have IL-6 agonist activity, conferring IL-6 responsiveness to gp130 expressing cells that lack cell surface IL-6R (37).

The Mouse/Rat IL-6 ELISpot assay is designed for the detection of IL-6 secreting cells at the single cell level, and it can be used to quantify the frequency of mouse or rat IL-6 secreting cells. ELISpot assays are well suited for monitoring cellular responses to various stimuli, treatments and therapies, and they have been used specifically for the quantification of a multitude of physiologic responses. Other methods for the assessment of cytokine-secreting cells are tedious and require previous *in vitro* expansion of cytokine secreting cells for several days. These assays typically are not suitable for measuring infrequent cell responses that occur at less than 1 in 1,000. ELISpot assays are highly reproducible and sensitive, and can be used to measure responses with frequencies well below 1 in 100,000. ELISpot assays do not require prior *in vitro* expansion of IL-6 secreting cells, and thus they are suitable for high-throughput analysis using only small volumes of primary cells. As such, ELISpot assays are useful tools for research in areas as diverse as antigen recognition, vaccine development, and the monitoring of various clinical trials.

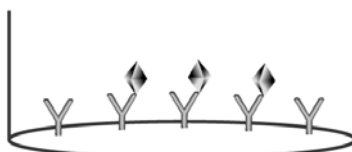
## PRINCIPLE OF THE ASSAY

The enzyme-linked immunospot (ELISpot) assay was originally developed for the detection of individual B cells secreting antigen-specific antibodies (38, 39). This method has since been adapted for the detection of individual cells secreting specific cytokines or other antigens (40, 41). ELISpot assays employ the quantitative sandwich enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA) technique. A polyclonal antibody specific for mouse/rat IL-6 has been pre-coated onto a PVDF (polyvinylidene difluoride)-backed microplate. Appropriately stimulated cells are pipetted into the wells and the microplate is placed into a humidified 37° C CO<sub>2</sub> incubator for a specified period of time. During this incubation period, the immobilized antibody in the immediate vicinity of the secreting cells binds secreted IL-6. After washing away any cells and unbound substances, a biotinylated polyclonal antibody specific for mouse/rat IL-6 is added to the wells. Following a wash to remove any unbound biotinylated antibody, alkaline-phosphatase conjugated to streptavidin is added. Unbound enzyme is subsequently removed by washing and a substrate solution (BCIP/NBT) is added. A blue-black colored precipitate forms and appears as spots at the sites of cytokine localization, with each individual spot representing an individual IL-6 secreting cell. The spots can be counted with an automated ELISpot reader system or manually using a stereomicroscope.

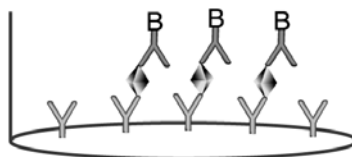
# ELISpot SCHEMATIC



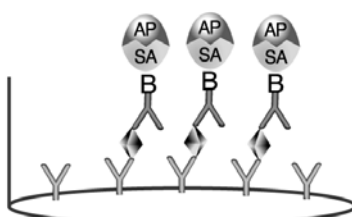
Incubate IL-6-secreting cells in an antibody-coated well.



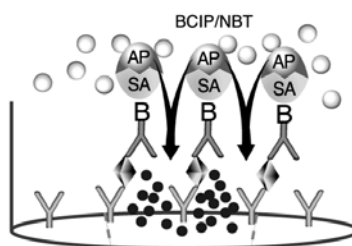
Remove cells by washing. Secreted IL-6 is captured by the immobilized antibody.



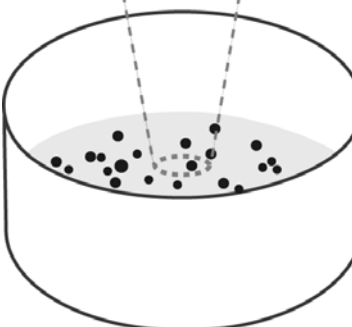
Incubate with biotinylated anti-IL-6 antibody.



Incubate with alkaline phosphatase conjugated streptavidin.



Add substrate and monitor the formation of colored spots.



## LIMITATIONS OF THE PROCEDURE

- FOR RESEARCH USE ONLY. NOT FOR USE IN DIAGNOSTIC PROCEDURES.
- The kit should not be used beyond the expiration date on the kit label.
- Any variation in pipetting and washing techniques, incubation time or temperature, or kit age can cause variation in density of spots, intensity of specific staining and background levels.

## PRECAUTIONS

Some components of this kit contain sodium azide, which may react with lead and copper plumbing to form explosive metallic azides. Flush with large volumes of water during disposal.

Do not use reagents from this kit with components from other R&D Systems' ELISpot or ELISA kits and/or components manufactured by other vendors.

Do not remove the flexible plastic underdrain on the bottom of the microplate before or during incubation and development since it may damage the PVDF membrane filters. The underdrain cover may be removed only after completing the incubation with BCIP/NBT chromogen.

Although the toxicity of the chromogenic substrate BCIP/NBT is not currently known, wear gloves to avoid contact with skin. Follow local, state and federal regulations to dispose of used BCIP/NBT.

## MATERIALS PROVIDED

**Mouse/Rat IL-6 Microplate** (Part 891080) - One 96-well PVDF-backed microplate coated with polyclonal antibody specific for mouse/rat IL-6.

**Detection Antibody Concentrate** (Part 891081) - 150  $\mu$ L of a 120X concentrated solution of biotinylated polyclonal antibody specific for mouse/rat IL-6 with preservatives.

**Streptavidin-AP Concentrate A** (Part 895358) - 150  $\mu$ L of a 120X concentrated solution of Streptavidin conjugated to Alkaline Phosphatase with preservatives.

**Dilution Buffer 1** (Part 895307) - 12 mL of a buffer for diluting Detection Antibody Concentrate with preservatives.

**Dilution Buffer 2** (Part 895354) - 12 mL of a buffer for diluting Streptavidin-AP Concentrate A with preservatives.

**Wash Buffer Concentrate** (Part 895308) - 50 mL of a 10X concentrated solution of a buffered surfactant with preservative.

**BCIP/NBT Chromogen** (Part 895867) - 12 mL of a stabilized mixture of 5-Bromo-4-Chloro-3'-Indolylphosphate p-Toluidine Salt (BCIP) and Nitro Blue Tetrazolium Chloride (NBT).

**Mouse/Rat IL-6 Positive Control** (Part 891082) - 2 ng of recombinant mouse IL-6; lyophilized.

## STORAGE

Store the unopened kit at 2 - 8° C. Do not use beyond the kit expiration date. This kit is validated for single use only. Results obtained with opened/reconstituted reagents at a later date may not be reliable.

## OTHER SUPPLIES REQUIRED

- Pipettes and pipette tips
- Deionized or distilled water
- Multi-channel pipette, squirt bottle, manifold dispenser, or automated microplate washer
- 500 mL graduated cylinder
- 37° C CO<sub>2</sub> incubator
- Sterile culture media
- Dissection microscope or an automated ELISpot reader

## TECHNICAL HINTS

- To minimize edge effect, place the microplate (bottom down) onto a piece of aluminum foil (about 4 x 6 inches). Add cells, cover the microplate with the lid and shape the foil around the edges of the microplate. The foil may be left on the microplate for the rest of the experimental procedure and removed after the BCIP/NBT has been washed off.
- Do not touch PVDF membrane filters with pipette tips when pipetting cells and reagents to avoid damage to the membranes.
- After completion of the experiment, do not dry the microplate at a temperature higher than 37° C since it may cause cracking of the PVDF membrane filters.
- The 96-well microplate provided in the kit is not sterile. However, due to the short incubation period and presence of antibiotics in the culture media, microbial contamination has not been a problem during the ELISpot procedure.
- The kit is designed for single use only. The layout of the assay should be carefully planned to maximize the use of the plate and reagents provided.
- The controls listed are recommended for each ELISpot experiment.

Positive Control - Use recombinant mouse IL-6.

Unstimulated/Negative Control - Use the same number of unstimulated cells as stimulated cells.

Background Control - Use sterile culture media.

Detection Antibody Control - Substitute phosphate buffered saline for Detection Antibody.

## REAGENT PREPARATION

**Wash Buffer** - If crystals have formed in the concentrate, warm to room temperature and mix gently until the crystals have completely dissolved. To prepare Wash Buffer, add 50 mL of Wash Buffer Concentrate to 450 mL of deionized water and mix well.

**Mouse/Rat IL-6 Positive Control** - Reconstitute lyophilized mouse IL-6 with 250 µL of culture medium that is used to incubate cells.

**Detection Antibody** - Tap or vortex the vial to release reagent collected in the cap. Transfer 100 µL of Detection Antibody Concentrate into the vial labeled Dilution Buffer 1 and mix well.

**For optimal performance, prepare Detection Antibody immediately before use.**

**Streptavidin-AP** - Tap or vortex the vial to release reagent collected in the cap. Transfer 100 µL of Streptavidin-AP Concentrate A into the vial labeled Dilution Buffer 2 and mix well.

**For optimal performance, prepare Streptavidin-AP immediately before use.**

## SAMPLE PREPARATION

The types of effector and responder cells used, method of cell separation, mode of stimulation, and length of incubation are to be determined by each investigator. R&D Systems' cell selection products may be suitable for the purification of effector and responder cells. For a complete product listing of human, mouse, and rat cell selection products, see the R&D Systems' catalog or visit the web site at [www.RnDSystems.com](http://www.RnDSystems.com).

## ASSAY PROCEDURE

**Bring all reagents as needed to room temperature, except the Detection Antibody Concentrate and Dilution Buffer 1, which should remain at 2 - 8° C. All samples and controls should be assayed at least in duplicate. An Assay Record Template is provided at the back of this insert to record controls and samples assayed.**

1. Fill all wells in the microplate with 200  $\mu$ L of sterile culture media and incubate for approximately 20 minutes at room temperature.
2. When cells are ready to be plated, aspirate the culture media from the wells. Immediately add 100  $\mu$ L of the appropriate cells and controls to each well (see Technical Hints for appropriate controls).
3. Incubate cells in a humidified 37° C CO<sub>2</sub> incubator. Optimal incubation time for each stimuli should be determined by each investigator. **Do not disturb the cells during the incubation period.**
4. Aspirate each well and wash, repeating the process three times for a total of four washes. Wash by filling each well with Wash Buffer (250 - 300  $\mu$ L) using a squirt bottle, multi-channel pipette, manifold dispenser, or autowasher. Complete removal of liquid at each step is essential to good performance. After the last wash, remove any remaining Wash Buffer by aspirating or decanting. Invert the plate and blot it against clean paper towels.

**Note: Adjust the height of the prongs of the manifold dispenser or autowasher to prevent damage to the membranes.**

5. Add 100  $\mu$ L of diluted Detection Antibody into each well and incubate at 2 - 8° C overnight.
6. Repeat step 4.
7. Add 100  $\mu$ L of diluted Streptavidin-AP into each well and incubate for 2 hours at room temperature.
8. Repeat step 4.
9. Add 100  $\mu$ L of BCIP/NBT Chromogen into each well and incubate for 1 hour at room temperature. **Protect from light.**
10. Discard the chromogen solution from the microplate and rinse the microplate with deionized water. Invert the microplate and tap to remove excess water. Remove the flexible plastic underdrain from the bottom of the microplate, wipe the bottom of the plate thoroughly with paper towels and dry completely either at room temperature (60 - 90 minutes) or 37° C (15 - 30 minutes).



## CALCULATION OF RESULTS

The developed microplate can be analyzed by counting spots either manually using a dissection microscope or by using a specialized automated ELISpot reader. Specific spots are round and have a dark center with slightly fuzzy edges. Quantitation of results can be done, for example, by calculating the number of spot forming cells (SFC) per number of cells added into the well.

## REPRODUCIBILITY DATA

Splenocytes from a C57BL mouse ( $5 \times 10^5$  cells/mL) and a Sprague Dawley rat ( $5 \times 10^5$  cells/mL) were stimulated with 4  $\mu$ g/mL of Con A overnight at 37° C in a 5% CO<sub>2</sub> incubator. The samples were assayed in seven wells according to the procedure and analyzed with a dissection microscope.

Mouse Sample		Rat Sample	
Well	Number of Spots Counted	Well	Number of Spots Counted
1	285	1	441
2	274	2	447
3	278	3	484
4	272	4	442
5	259	5	437
6	259	6	475
7	256	7	456

## TROUBLESHOOTING GUIDE

Observation	Problem	Corrective Action
Following the incubation with BCIP/NBT chromogen and rinsing the microplate with deionized water, the dark-blue background color of filter membrane attenuates visualization and quantitation of spots.	Wet membrane	Microplates cannot be analyzed accurately until PVDF filter membranes are completely dry. Wait until membrane becomes dry, usually 15 - 30 minutes at 37° C or 60 - 90 minutes at room temperature.
The number of spots in the wells that contained the cells is high but their contrast as well as intensity of staining in the Positive Control wells is low.	Underdevelopment - may be a result of using Streptavidin-AP and/or BCIP/NBT solutions that have not been brought to room temperature	Bring reagents to room temperature before adding to the wells.
The number of spots in the wells that contained cells is lower than expected whereas Positive Control wells turned black-blue.	Cell stimulation problem	Ensure that reagents used to stimulate the cytokine release from the cells retained their biological activity. One way to check is to perform immunocytochemistry on fixed cells after stimulation.
	Too few cells added to the wells	Increase the number of cells added per well.
Following incubation with BCIP/NBT and drying the microplate, the density of the spots makes it difficult to quantify them.	Too many cells were added to the wells	Make dilutions of cells ( <i>i.e.</i> , $1 \times 10^6$ , $5 \times 10^5$ , $1 \times 10^5$ , $5 \times 10^4$ , $1 \times 10^4$ cells per well) to determine the optimal number of cells that will result in formation of distinct spots.

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**ASSAY RECORD TEMPLATE**

This template may be used as a record of samples and controls run in an assay.

1							
2							
3							
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12							
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G