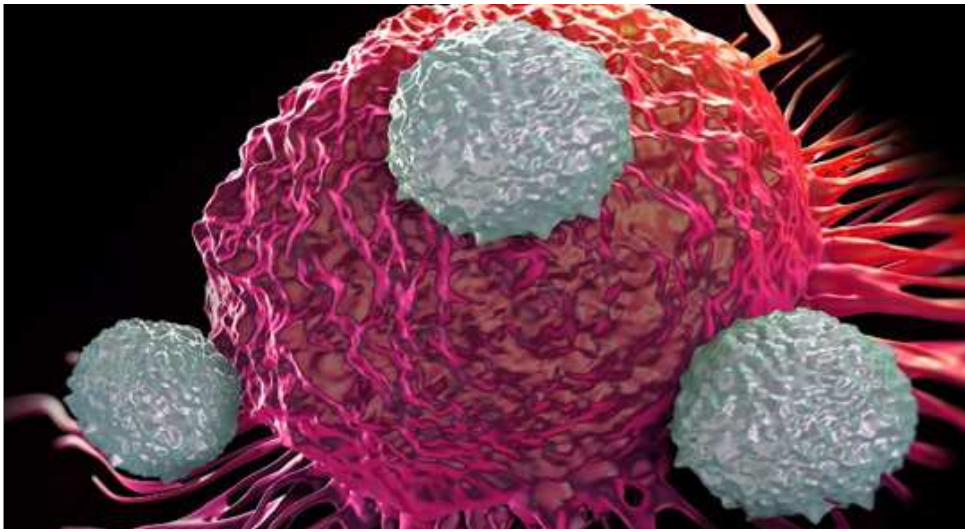
SARTORIUS

Immune Cell Phenotype and Function

Human NK Cell Mediated Killing Kit

Catalog No. 97082 for 1 x 96-well format
Catalog No. 97083 for 5 x 96-well format
Catalog No. 97084 for 1 x 384-well format
Catalog No. 97085 for 5 x 384-well format



Open immediately upon arrival and store reagents at temperatures stated on labels. For research use only.

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Table of Contents

Section 1. Quick guides

The quick guides summarize the protocol. Detailed instructions are provided in **Section 10** (Assay protocols for all formats) and **Appendix A** (Proliferation and Encoding Dye protocol for target cells).

NOTE: For first time assay users, refer to Section 10 for detailed step-by-step procedures. The Quick guides serve as aids to utilize once familiar with the protocol.

1.1 Quick guide for encoding target cells

Encoding target cells

Wash target cells with protein free buffer.
Re-suspend in protein free buffer at **1-4 million/mL.**.

↓

Reconstitute one vial of lyophilized Cell Proliferation and Encoding Dye with 50 µl of anhydrous DMSO until fully dissolved. Dilute Cell Proliferation and Encoding Dye in protein free buffer at **1:1250.**

↓

Combine target cells and the diluted encoding dye solution **1:1.** | Incubate at 37°C 15 minutes, Dark

Start time _____ *Stop time* _____

↓

Wash cells by adding 2-fold volume of fresh culture medium.
Spin **500 xg, 5 minutes**. Remove Supernatant.
Repeat wash 2 more times.

↓

Re-suspend cells at density needed for co-culture assay.

Notes

1.2 Quick guide for 96-well assay format

1. Reagent preparation

A.

Combine two different lyophilized Cytokine Standards into the same tube.
IFNγ ☐ **Granzyme B** ☐
Add 200 µL fresh culture medium to solubilize.

Incubate RT, 15 minutes ☐

Start time _____ *Stop time* _____

Prepare **1:3 serial dilution** of Cytokine Standards with fresh culture medium. ☐

B.

Add Cell Membrane Integrity Dye to Antibody Detection Cocktail (**1:50 dilution**). ☐

2. Assay protocol

Add **10 µL/well** samples and standards to the assay plate. ☐

Add **10 µL/well** Cytokine Capture Beads Cocktail.
Quick Spin | Brief Shake* — Incubate RT, 60 minutes, Dark ☐

Start time _____ *Stop time* _____

Add **10 µL/well** Cytokine Detection Cocktail.
Quick Spin | Brief Shake* — Incubate RT, 60 minutes, Dark ☐

Start time _____ *Stop time* _____

Add **10 µL/well** combined Antibody Detection Cocktail **with**
Cell Membrane Integrity Dye.
Quick Spin | Brief Shake* — Incubate RT, 60 minutes, Dark ☐

Start time _____ *Stop time* _____

Add **100 µL/well** Wash Buffer.
Long Spin **(300 xg, 5 minutes)**. Aspirate Supernatant.
Agitate in residual liquid with Strong shake * ☐

Add **20 µL/well** Wash Buffer. Acquire data. ☐

Notes

* Quick Spin: 300 xg, 5 seconds | Brief Shake: 2000 RPM, 20 seconds| Strong Shake: 3000 RPM, 60 seconds

1.3 Quick Guide for 384-well assay format

1. Reagent preparation

A.

Combine two different lyophilized Cytokine Standards into the same tube.
IFNγ ☐ **Granzyme B** ☐
Add 200 µL fresh culture medium to solubilize.
Incubate RT, 15 minutes ☐

Start time _____ *Stop time* _____

Prepare **1:3 serial dilution** of Cytokine Standards with fresh culture medium. ☐

B.

Add Cell Membrane Integrity Dye to Antibody Detection Cocktail (**1:50 dilution**). ☐

2. Assay protocol

Add **10 µL/well** samples and standards to the assay plate. ☐

Add **10 µL/well** Cytokine Capture Beads Cocktail.
Quick Spin | Brief Shake*
Incubate RT, 60 minutes, Dark ☐

Start time _____ *Stop time* _____

Add **10 µL/well** Cytokine Detection Cocktail.
Quick Spin | Brief Shake*
Incubate RT, 60 minutes, Dark ☐

Start time _____ *Stop time* _____

Add **10 µL/well** combined Antibody Detection Cocktail **with** Cell Membrane Integrity Dye.
Quick Spin | Brief Shake*
Incubate RT, 60 minutes, Dark ☐

Start time _____ *Stop time* _____

Add **50 µL/well** Wash Buffer.
Long Spin **(300 xg, 5 minutes)**. Aspirate Supernatant.
Agitate in residual liquid with Strong shake * ☐

Add **10 µL/well** Wash Buffer. Acquire data. ☐

Notes

* Quick Spin: 300 xg, 5 seconds | Brief Shake: 2000 RPM, 20 seconds| Strong Shake: 3000 RPM, 60 seconds

Section 2. Introduction

The Human Natural Killer (NK) Cell Mediated Killing Kit was designed for ease of use in multiplexing cell phenotype and function markers along with bead-based, secreted protein profile measurements in the same assay. This assay, optimized for suspension cell cultures, offers unique advantages:

- Simultaneous measurement of effector and target cells, and secreted effector proteins in a mixed cells and beads assay format. This assay format disrupts common immunology research workflows, which generally require multiple assays, and is optimized for use on the Intellicyt® iQue® platform (iQue®3 and iQue® Screener PLUS) equipped with Violet, Blue and Red lasers (VBR).

- Single platform and data analysis package streamline data acquisition, analysis workflow, and solve data synchronization issues.

- Analysis of NK cell phenotypes, and functions at different stages in a single, high content assay including activation markers (CD69 and CD25), cell membrane integrity, cell count, secreted pro-inflammatory cytokine Interferon gamma (IFNγ), and pro-apoptotic protease Granzyme B (see **Figure 1** for more detail).

- Simplified 'plug-and-play' assay workflow with no additional color compensation, and pre-mixed reagents for CD antibody staining and for secreted protein detection. Total assay time is approximately 3.5 hours, with a hands-on time of about 30 minutes. An included template with pre-set compensation matrices enables data acquisition of the multiplexed, phenotyping assay without the need for single stain color compensation

- Flexibility to choose additional cytokine measurements from a validated list of Human NK Cell Companion Kits. The killing assay kit includes QBeads® for two different effector protein measurements: IFNγ and Granzyme B. However, the user may choose to multiplex the assay and measure up to 6 additional cytokines/effector proteins from the Human NK Cell Companion Kits, including MIP-1α, RANTES, GM-CSF, CD178 (Fas Ligand), Granzyme A, and TNF (sold separately, see **Appendix D**).

Section 3. Assay principles

3.1 Multiplexed assay in a single well

The Human NK Cell Mediated Killing Kit is a cell and bead mixture assay that simultaneously measures these markers:

- Cell phenotype markers: CD3, CD56, and CD16
- NK cell functional markers: CD69 and CD25
- Target cell identification
- Effector secreted pro-inflammatory cytokine, IFNγ, and pro-apoptotic protease, Granzyme B
- Cell count and cell membrane integrity (effectors and targets)

In each assay well, target cells are distinguished from effector cells by staining with a fluorescent encoder dye. Live and dead populations of the cell types are then determined by staining with a fluorescent membrane integrity dye that enters only dead cells or those with a compromised membrane, staining the nucleic DNA by intercalation. Live NK cells are immunophenotyped by staining with a fluorescent antibody panel to separate CD3- CD56+ NK cells. The expression of the IgG Fc receptor III (CD16) on the NK cells can then be assessed. The panel also includes 2 different NK cell functional activation markers, CD69 and CD25. Pro-inflammatory effector secreted cytokine, IFNγ, and pro-apoptotic serine protease, Granzyme B, are qualitatively assessed in a "sandwich" immune assay format using 2 different QBeads® included in the same well.

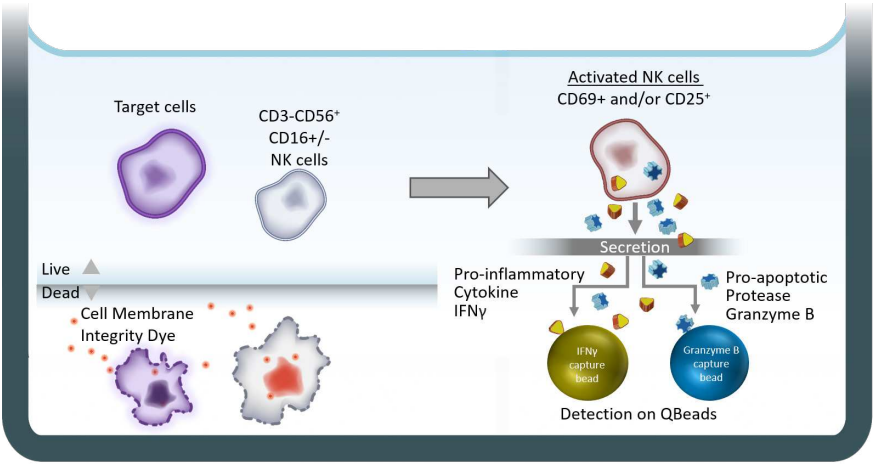


Figure 1. Simultaneous endpoint measurement in a single well.

3.2 Workflow overview

Effector cells and encoded target cells are combined in culture plates. Following the appropriate co-culture time period, an aliquot sample of the cells/supernatant mixture from each well is transferred into assay plates along with the IFNγ/Granzyme B Capture Beads Cocktail and incubated at room temperature for 60 minutes. Next, the Cytokine Detection Cocktail is added and the assay plates are again incubated for 60 minutes at room temperature. After the second incubation, a fluorescent Antibody Detection Cocktail containing a Cell Membrane Integrity Dye is added, and the assay plates are incubated for another 60 minutes at room temperature. Following the final incubation, the assay plates are washed once before acquisition on the iQue®3 (VBR) or iQue® Screener PLUS (VBR).

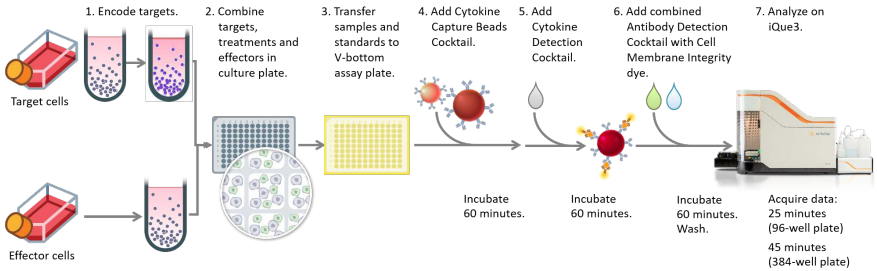


Figure 2. Assay workflow.

Table 1. Assay result readouts

T cell type	NK cell ID			Cell surface activation markers		Secreted effector proteins		Cell count	Cell viability
	CD3	CD56	CD16	CD69	CD25	IFNγ	Granzyme B		
NK Cells	-	+	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	+	#	0 – 100%
Target Cells	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	#	0 – 100%

Identification of NK cells and assessment of the activation state of NK cells. Secreted IFNγ and Granzyme B are included in the final readouts. In **Table 1**, "+" means highly expressed/secreted, "-" means low or no expression/ secretion, "+/-" means partially expressed/secreted, "#" means a certain number of cells, and cell viability ranges between 0 -100%.

Section 4. Reagents provided

Table 2. Human NK Cell Mediated Killing Kit contents

Intellicyt® reagent	Catalog No. 97082 1 x 96-well	Catalog No. 97083 5 x 96-well	Catalog No. 97084 1 x 384-well	Catalog No. 97085 5 x 384-well
Human IFNγ Lyophilized Cytokine Standard	1 vial	5 vials	1 vial	5 vials
Human Granzyme B Lyophilized Cytokine Standard	1 vial	5 vials	1 vial	5 vials
Lyophilized Cell Proliferation and Encoding Dye V/ Blue (Tag-it Violet™)	1 vial	5 vials	1 vial	5 vials
DMSO Anhydrous	1 vial 95 µL	1 vial 500 µL	1 vial 95 µL	1 vial 500 µL
Cell Membrane Integrity Dye (B/Green)	100 µL 1 vial	100 µL 5 vials	250 µL 1 vial	250 µL 5 vials
Cytokine Capture Beads Cocktail	2.0 mL 1 vial	2.0 mL 5 vials	5.4 mL 1 vial	5.4 mL 5 vials
Cytokine Detection Cocktail	2.0 mL 1 vial	2.0 mL 5 vials	5.4 mL 1 vial	5.4 mL 5 vials
Antibody Detection Cocktail	2.0 mL 1 vial	2.0 mL 5 vials	5.4 mL 1 vial	5.4 mL 5 vials
Wash Buffer	25 mL	125 mL	50 mL	250 mL

Section 5. Storage and stability

With the exception of the lyophilized Cytokine Standards and the Wash Buffer, all other reagents are light sensitive; protect from light. Store lyophilized Cytokine Standards, Cytokine Capture Beads Cocktail, Cytokine Detection Cocktail, and the Antibody Detection Cocktail at 2-8°C. The vials of single-use Cell Membrane Integrity Dye (B/Green) and Cell Proliferation and Encoding Dye V/Blue (Tag-it Violet™) should be stored at -20°C. Avoid repeated freezing and thawing. Expiration date is stated on the kit. Do not use after the date of expiration.

Section 6. iQue®3 (VBR) and iQue® Screener PLUS (VBR) detector channels

This kit is only compatible with the Intellicyt® iQue®3 (VBR) and iQue® Screener PLUS (VBR). Other iQue® systems including iQue® Screener (BR), iQue® Screener PLUS (VYB), iQue® Screener PLUS (BR), iQue®3 (VYB), and iQue®3 (BR) will NOT work with this assay due to detection channel limitations. Classification of QBeads® (IFNγ and Granzyme B) is performed using the RL1 and RL2 channels. In addition, RL1 is used for CD25 detection.

Detector	Spectrum	Violet Laser (405 nm)		Blue Laser (488 nm)		Red Laser (640 nm)	
445/45 nm		VL1	Cell Proliferation and Encoding Dye V/Blue (Tag-it Violet™)				
530/30 nm		VL2		BL1	Cell Membrane Integrity Dye (B/Green)		
572/28 nm		VL3		BL2	QBeads		
615/24 nm		VL4	CD56	BL3			
675/30 nm		VL5		BL4		RL1	CD25
780/60 nm		VL6	CD69	BL5	CD16	RL2	CD3

Figure 3. iQue®3 (VBR) and iQue® Screener PLUS (VBR) lasers, detector channels and cell markers panel

Section 7. Materials required but not provided

- iQue®3 (VBR) or iQue® Screener PLUS (VBR)
- Cell populations of interest and appropriate complete cell culture medium
- Centrifuge (up to 500 xg capability for use with microplates and microfuge tubes)
- Vortex mixer
- 96- or 384-well V-bottom assay plate (e.g., Greiner #651101 or Greiner #781280)
- Microfuge tubes and/or 15 mL conical tubes
- Reagent reservoirs
- Universal black lid (e.g., Corning #3935) or foil to protect from light/evaporation
- Multi-channel pipettes (See **Appendix C**)
- Plate Washer (e.g., BioTek model ELx405)

Section 8. Recommended materials

We strongly recommend running positive and negative controls with this assay.

- Positive Control Option: Stimulation of enriched NK cells with IL-2 (200 u/mL) + IL-15 (100 ng/mL) for 16-24 hr to induce expression of activation markers and IFNγ production
- Negative Control Option: Culture medium without stimulating agents or target cells may be used as a negative control (blank).

Section 9. Cell and reagent preparation

9.1 Samples

a. This assay is designed to detect NK cell mediated killing of target cells following co-culture of effectors and target cells. Prior to preparing co-cultures, target cells must be encoded using Proliferation and Encoding Dye V/Blue (Tag-it Violet™). See **Appendix A.** Before running the assay, prepare co-cultures in appropriate culture medium and conditions, including initial input cell density. If the assay cell density is too low, it may be difficult to achieve statistical significance in the cell population of interest.

b. This assay is designed to measure the relative amounts of Granzyme B in co-culture samples. If an actual quantitative measurement of Granzyme B is required at a specific time point, the co-culture plate should be spun and a sample of supernatant (without cells) may be removed for cytokine analysis using additional QBeads® kits.

c. This assay is validated in cell culture with RPMI 1640 medium with 10% fetal bovine serum. Other similar culture medium may also work in this assay, but must be validated.

9.2 Assay plate design

a. The assay plate design can be found in the Design section of ForeCyt®, and in the template provided (USB key in kit package).

b. This assay uses serially diluted cytokine standards to generate 2 standard curves for quantitation of IFNγ and Granzyme B in the sample.

9.3 Setting up standards in ForeCyt®

A template with the standards plate design is provided in the kit (**Figure 4**). The Standards sub-section can be located within the Design section of ForeCyt®. The Standard Set is preconfigured with the lowest value set to zero in the template provided. It is recommended to load standards in duplicate from low to high concentration in the direction of the plate read (96-well format: left to right; 384-well format: top to bottom). For ForeCyt® version 7.1 and later this is the default setting, however, for earlier versions, this format requires the "Reverse Series" box to be checked (**Figure 5**). If necessary, the template configuration may be altered in the Design section of the experiment:

Design Standards→Edit Standard Set. Representative standard curves are shown in **Figure 6**.

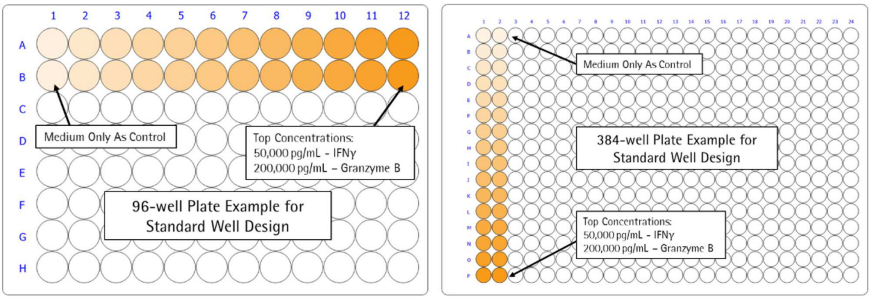


Figure 4. Configuration of the Standard Set. The Standard Set provided in the kit template is arranged from left to right for 96-well formats, and from top to bottom for 384-well formats.

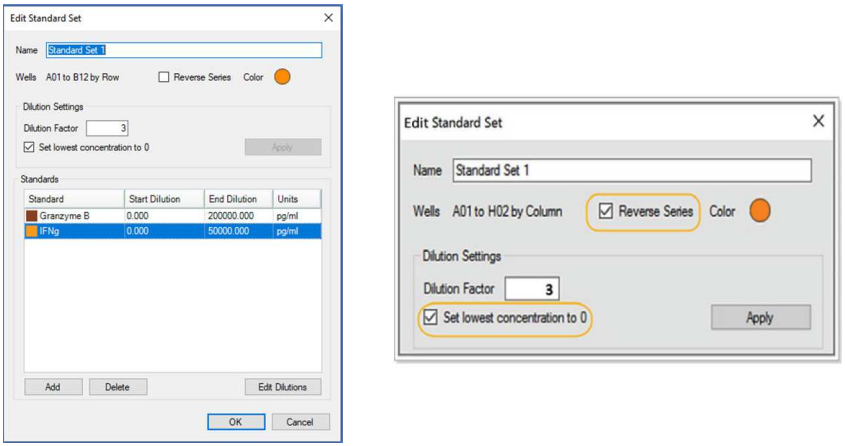


Figure 5. Editing the Standard Set. (Left) The provided assay template is preset to have cytokine standards in the low to high configuration with the lowest concentration set to zero. If a different orientation or lowest concentration is used, the Standard Set may be edited as necessary. (Right) In versions of ForeCyt® (prior to 7.1), to achieve a left to right (from low concentration to high concentration) in 96-well plate, the "Reverse Series" checkbox must be selected. Check the "Set lowest concentration to 0" checkbox in all ForeCyt® versions.

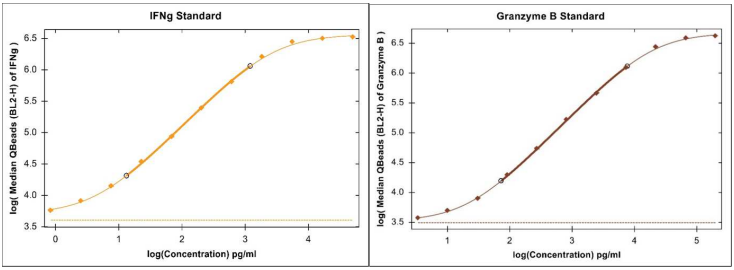


Figure 6. Representative standard curves (IFNγ and Granzyme B) with 1:3 serial dilutions. The bold lines indicate the linear range in each graph, with the detection range wider than the linear range. The linear ranges for IFNγ and Granzyme B are approximately 12-1700 pg/mL and 60-8000 pg/mL, respectively. The dashed line represents the fluorescent background when the standard concentration is zero.

9.4 Reagents

a. Briefly centrifuge all vials before use to prevent reagent loss.

b. Vortex the Cytokine Capture Beads Cocktail, Cytokine Detection Cocktail and the Antibody Detection Cocktail prior to use to ensure homogenous solution and consistent concentration in the assay. These reagents contain QBeads® and/or antibodies that tend to settle and aggregate over time.

9.5 Cytokine Standard preparation

a. Cytokine Standard curve ranges are 0.0 pg/mL – 50,000 pg/mL for IFNγ and 0.0 pg/mL – 200,000 pg/mL for Granzyme B.

b. From the provided glass vials, combine the lyophilized Cytokine Standard spheres into a 1.5 mL microfuge tube or 15 mL conical tube. Use only 1 glass vial of each cytokine for the following standard preparation on each assay day.

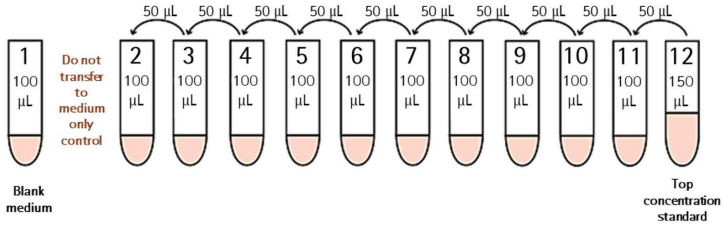
c. Add 200 µL fresh culture medium to the tube with the Cytokine Standard spheres. DO NOT MIX. Mixing at this step causes the reagent to foam.

d. Allow the spheres to dissolve for 15 minutes at room temperature.

e. Once dissolved, pipette up and down to gently mix Cytokine Standards.

f. Perform 1:3 serial dilutions of Cytokine Standards (i.e. 50 µL of top standard into 100 µL of culture medium serially). For 96-well format, perform a 12-point curve, including blank medium control (**Figure 7**, top). For 384-well format, perform a 16-point curve, including blank medium control (**Figure 7**, bottom).

96-well format
12-point, 1:3 serial dilutions of cytokine standards to fill rows 1-2 of the assay plate.



384-well format
16-point, 1:3 serial dilutions of cytokine standards to fill columns 1-2 of the assay plate.

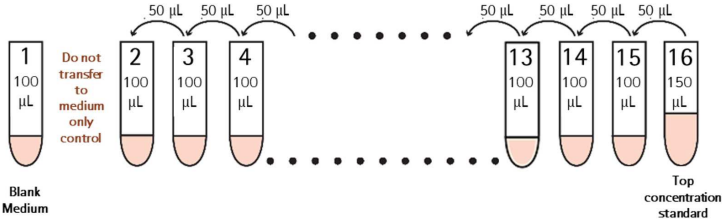


Figure 7. Serial dilution of Cytokine Standards. For both 96- and 384-well formats, Cytokine Standards are to be serially diluted 1:3 by adding 50 µL from the top concentration standard into 100 µL of culture medium serially. A blank medium tube should be included as a control.

9.6 Cytokine Capture Beads Cocktail

a. A vial of pre-mixed Cytokine Capture Beads Cocktail is provided in this kit.

b. Vigorously vortex the container for at least 15 seconds immediately prior to use. If the dilution is prepared in a reservoir, mixing may be performed by manually pipetting the solution

9.7 Cell Membrane Integrity Dye and Antibody Detection Cocktail preparation

a. Vials of the Cell Membrane Integrity Dye (B/Green) should be stored at -20°C upon receipt. It is thawed and added to the Antibody Detection Cocktail fresh on the day of the assay according to the kit format.

Table 3. Volumes for Cell Membrane Integrity Dye addition to vial of Antibody Detection Cocktail

Kit Format	Cell Membrane Integrity Dye (B/Green)	Antibody Detection Cocktail (vial volume)
1 × 96-wells	40 µL	2.0 mL
5 × 96-wells	40 µL	2.0 mL
1 × 384-wells	108 µL	5.4 mL
5 × 384-wells	108 µL	5.4 mL

Section 10. Assay protocol for all formats

NOTE: The following protocol includes brief shaking steps (2,000 RPM for 20 seconds) and strong shaking steps (3,000 RPM for 60 seconds).

WARNING: MAKE SURE THAT THE RPM FOR THESE SHAKES ARE CORRECT TO AVOID WELL CROSS-CONTAMINATION.

This Protocol describes **96-well** and **384-well** plate formats.
Total Time: 3.5 hours
Hands-On Time: Approximately 30 minutes

10.1 Add cell/supernatant mixture samples and Cytokine Standards

a. Ensure the cell/supernatant mixture in the original culture plate is in suspension by manual pipetting 6-8 times, then transfer **10 µL** of sample to each well of the assay plate designated as Sample during the plate set up on the ForeCyt® Design section.

b. Transfer **10 µL** of the cytokine standards prepared earlier (**Section 9.5**) to each well of the assay plate designated for Standards in the ForeCyt® Design section.

10.2 Add the Cytokine Capture Beads Cocktail to the assay plate

a. Vigorously vortex Cytokine Capture Beads Cocktail for at least 15 seconds and transfer to a reservoir.

b. Transfer **10 µL** of the Cytokine Capture Beads Cocktail to each assay well. Agitate the reagent in the reservoir occasionally to prevent bead settling.

c. Quick spin (300 xg, 5 seconds) and brief shake (2,000 RPM, 20 seconds) using the iQue®3 (VBR) or iQue® Screener PLUS (VBR) plate shaker to ensure thorough mixing.

d. Cover the plate to prevent evaporation and protect from light. Incubate the plate at room temperature for 60 minutes.

NOTE: During this liquid transfer, change pipette tips to avoid cross-well contamination.

10.3 Add the Cytokine Detection Cocktail

a. Transfer the Cytokine Detection Cocktail to a reservoir. Add **10 µL** per well to the assay plate.

b. Quick spin (300 xg, 5 seconds) and brief shake (2,000 RPM, 20 seconds) using the iQue®3 (VBR) or iQue® Screener PLUS (VBR) plate shaker to ensure thorough mixing.

c. Cover and incubate in the dark at room temperature for 60 minutes.

10.4 Add the combined Antibody Detection Cocktail with Cell Membrane Integrity Dye

a. Transfer the combined Antibody Detection Cocktail with Cell Membrane Integrity Dye prepared earlier (**Section 9.7**) to a reservoir. Add **10 µL** per well to the assay plate.

b. Quick spin (300 xg, 5 seconds) and brief shake (2,000 RPM, 20 seconds) using the iQue®3 (VBR) or iQue® Screener PLUS (VBR) plate shaker to ensure thorough mixing.

c. Cover plate and incubate in the dark at room temperature for 60 minutes.

10.5 Wash and resuspension

a. Add **100 µL/well** (96-well format) or **50 µL/well** (384-well format) of Wash Buffer to the assay plate.

b. Centrifuge the plate (300 xg, 5 minutes).

c. Aspirate the supernatant.

d. Resuspend sample in residual liquid with a strong shake on the iQue®3 (VBR) or iQue® Screener PLUS (VBR) plate shaker (3000 RPM, 60 seconds).

e. Add **20 µL/well** (96-well format) or **10 µL/well** (384-well format) of Wash Buffer to the assay plate. Gently tap the plate on workbench to ensure that all samples are at the well bottom. Specifically for the 384-well format, an additional quick spin (300 xg, 5 seconds) and brief shake (2000 RPM, 20 seconds) should be performed.

f. Secure the assay plate onto the plate loader of the iQue®3 (VBR) or iQue® Screener PLUS (VBR) system. The samples are now ready for acquisition.

NOTE: It is recommended that the aspiration step be carried out using a plate washer following the manufacturer's recommendations (see **Section 12**, Best practices and tips). The specific plate washer must first be optimized to avoid sample loss during the aspiration. If a plate washer is not available, manual aspiration using a multichannel pipette or plate flicking may be employed.

Section 11. Plate acquisition and data analysis

11.1 Acquire plate

a. Launch ForeCyt® software.

b. Import the provided experiment template (included on USB key in the kit package). Create a New Experiment using the provided template.

c. In the Design section:

   i. Well Type sub-section: Assign sample wells, including positive and negative control wells. (Positive and negative controls are helpful for fine-tuning gates for unactivated/activated populations during data analysis).

   ii. Series sub-section: Assign wells for compound series (dose-responses).

   iii. Standards sub-section: Edit standard set if necessary — only when different plate location, orientation or lowest concentration has been employed to ensure proper plate layout.

d. In the Protocol section: Adjust sip times and inter-well shaking as needed to achieve statistical significance for your cell population of interest (Refer to the tables in **Section 12**, Best practices and tips).

e. Click "Run" on the Controller to acquire the plate.

NOTE: Remove the plate lid prior to clicking "Run" on the Controller.

11.2 Data analysis and gating hierarchy

The template gates are pre-set for different populations. Each gate can be adjusted to improve fit on populations of interest (**Figures 8–10**). An optimized compensation spillover matrix has also been included in the kit template (**Figure 11**). If preferred, gates can be drawn manually or existing gates in the template can be fine-tuned based on the gating strategy shown below:

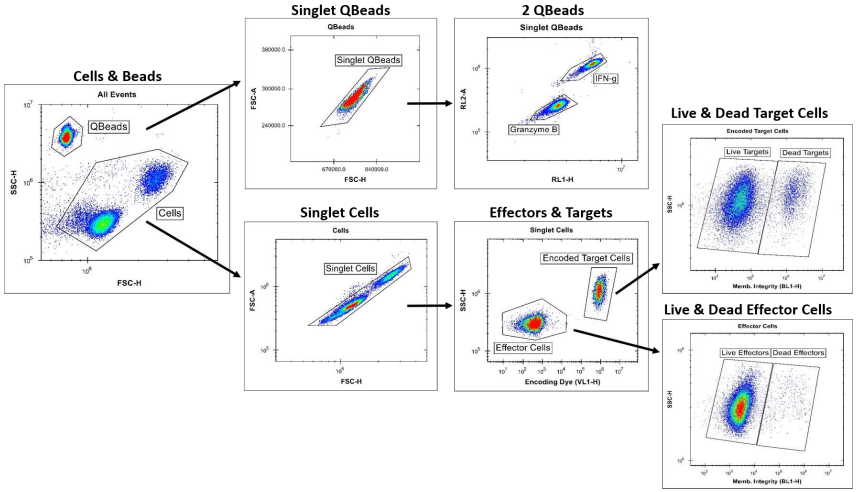


Figure 8. Gating QBeads® and cell populations. From All Events identify the QBeads® and cell populations followed by identification of singlet bead and singlet cell populations. The individual IFNγ/ Granzyme B QBeads® populations can then be identified from the singlet QBeads® population. Separate effector and target cell populations are identified from the singlet cell population based on an encoding dye. Live/dead cell populations can then be further identified for both the effector and target cell populations.

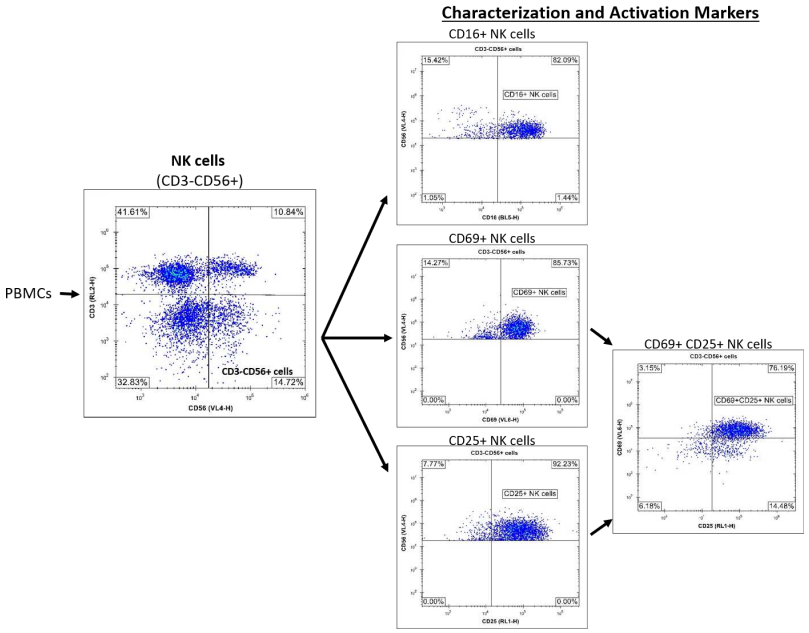


Figure 9. Gating different cell phenotypes from Live Effector cells. From Live Effectors, identify CD3-, CD56+ NK cells followed by analysis of CD16 expression and activation markers, CD69 and/or CD25.

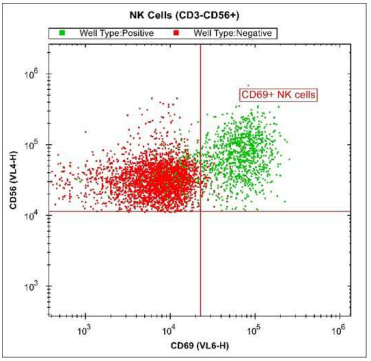


Figure 10. Use positive and negative control wells to fine tune gates. Once positive and negative wells have been designated in the Design section, create an overlay plot to help fine tune the gates of cell populations. Shown is an example of using positive and negative wells to create an overlay plot to help fine tune the gates of unactivated NK cells (negative; red) vs. cytokine activated NK cells (positive; green).

11.3 Compensation spillover matrix

Primary Channel \ Spillover Channel	Viability (BL1-H)	QBeads (BL2-H)	CD16 (BL5-H)	CD25 (RL1-H)	CD3 (RL2-H)	Encoding (VL1-H)	CD56 (VL4-H)	CD69 (VL6-H)
Viability (BL1-H)		0.00	0.98	7.56	1.01	0.39	3.26	0.38
QBeads (BL2-H)	0.00		0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
CD16 (BL5-H)	0.37	0.00		0.04	22.05	0.00	0.09	11.90
CD25 (RL1-H)	0.00	0.00	0.03		5.76	0.00	0.03	0.18
CD3 (RL2-H)	0.00	0.00	0.71	5.26		0.00	0.00	4.74
Encoding (VL1-H)	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.22	0.00		20.68	0.03
CD56 (VL4-H)	0.00	0.00	0.11	0.14	0.02	1.05		2.53
CD69 (VL6-H)	0.02	0.00	3.54	0.11	20.94	3.28	0.28	

Figure 11. Compensation spillover matrix. This compensation matrix is included in the ForeCyt® template and is applied when experiment templates are employed for data acquisition. There is no need to adjust any compensation metrics.

Section 12. Best practices and tips

12.1 Dilute the protein standards with fresh culture medium

It is critical to use fresh culture medium when reconstituting the Cytokine Standards to avoid possible matrix effect and to ensure data reproducibility and reliability. Medium should not differ from that used in the cell culture sample. A specific diluent for protein standards is not provided with this kit.

12.2 Plate type

The assay protocols in this manual are designed for both 96-well and 384-well plate formats. The Human NK cell Mediated Killing Kit has been tested with both 96-well, and 384-well V-bottom plates (Greiner 651101 and Greiner 781280, respectively). This assay kit provides templates for both 96-well and 384-well formats.

12.3 Manual pipetting recommendation

This protocol requires pipetting volumes between 10 µL and 100 µL depending on the plate formats. Care should be taken during liquid transfers so that volumes are fully dispensed with appropriate pipettes. Avoid well cross-contamination by changing pipette tips between wells. When pipetting small volumes, it is best practice to touch the bottom of the well (in an empty plate) or the side-wall of a well (when occupied with sample/reagent) to ensure release of the liquid into the assay well. Touching the wall prevents the liquid droplet from hanging on the pipette tip instead of releasing into the assay well. A quick spin will force the newly dispensed reagent to the well bottom to mix with the existing reagent/sample already in the well. For single and multi-channel pipette recommendations, see **Appendix C**.

12.4 Mixing plate contents using a shaker

The use of a plate shaker to mix plate contents is required when performing this assay. If a separate plate shaker is not available, the shaker on the iQue®3 (VBR) or iQue® Screener PLUS (VBR) may be used without exceeding the volume and speed limitations (**Table 4**). From the ForeCyt® menu bar, select Device → Manual Control. In the Manual Control window, set the desired shake speed.

Table 4. Volume and speed limitations when using the iQue®3 (VBR) or iQue® Screener PLUS (VBR) shaker.

Plate Type	Well Volume (µL)	Maximum Speed (RPM)
96-well	20–40	2600
96-well	40–60	2200
96-well	60+	*
384-well	10–30	3000
384-well	30–50	2800
384-well	50+	*
* Larger volumes will require additional optimization. To determine ideal shake speeds for high volume assays, it is recommended to begin at a lower RPM value and gradually increase to a higher RPM value. Care should be taken to avoid well cross- contamination.		

From the ForeCyt® menu bar, select Device → Manual Control. In the Manual Control window, set the desired shake speed (**Figure 12**). As soon as the "On/Plate Shake" Shaker Controls checkbox is selected, the shaker will begin to shake and continue to shake until disabled by deselecting the checkbox.

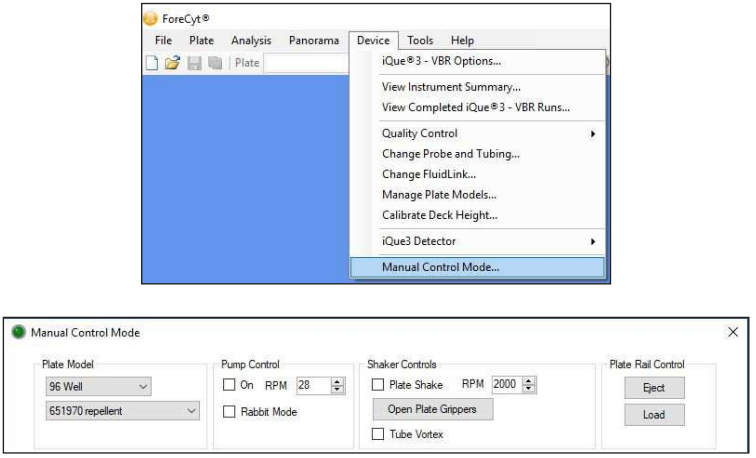


Figure 12. Steps for using the shaker on iQue®3 (VBR) or iQue® Screener PLUS (VBR). Set the shaker speed to either 2000 RPM or 3000 RPM depending on the assay requirements. It is important to note that shaking at 3000 RPM is reserved only for the step post-aspiration. Shaking the plate at 3000 RPM with liquid in the wells will result in cross-contamination

12.5 Use a plate washer for aspiration

For assay aspiration steps it is best to use an automated plate washer. If a plate washer is not available, manual aspiration using a multichannel pipette or plate flicking may be employed; however these techniques may result in severe sample loss and increased assay variability. An automated washer is the preferred method. Aspiration programs for this assay have been tested on a BioTek ELx405 Select (**Table 5**). For a different plate washer brand or model, it is best practice to optimize specific plate washer settings so that sample loss is avoided.

Table 5. Aspiration settings using the BioTek ELx405 Select

Plate Type	Height setting	Height offset (mm)	Rate setting	Aspiration rate (mm/s)
Greiner 96-well, V-bottom (#651101)	#40	5.08	#6	15
Greiner 384-well, V-bottom (#781280)	#31	3.937	#6	15

12.6 Adjust the sip time to acquire enough cell events

Sip time determines how many cell events are acquired from each well. The template in the kit has a default sip time of 8 seconds per well for a 96-well format and 4 seconds for a 384-well format. Adjust sip time as necessary to ensure that enough cell events from the population of interest are acquired to reach statistical significance during data analysis. Sip volume may vary slightly from machine to machine and day to day. Sip volume is approximately 1.5 µL per second. Adjustment of sip time from the 8 second default may be made in the ForeCyt® Protocol section. Inter-well shaking may need to be adjusted as well, as settling will occur over time.

Tables 6 and **7** below provide additional guidance on sip time and shaking adjustments, using a cell density in the culture plate of 1 million/mL as a reference. Refer to **Appendix B** for additional measures to improve cell event acquisition in addition to increasing sip time.

Table 6. Data acquisition adjustments for 96-well format

Sip time per well	Culture plate cell density	Sample transfer volume	Final volume (following re-suspension)	Estimated cell density in assay plate	Estimated acquired volume*
4 seconds	1×10^6 cells/mL (minimum seeding density)	10 µL (from culture plate to assay plate)	25 µL (20 µL + residual volume)	0.3×10^6 cells /mL (assuming 20% loss during wash)	6 µL
6 seconds					9 µL
8 seconds (default)					12 µL
10 seconds					15 µL
12 seconds					18 µL

* Assuming a 1.5 µL/s sip per well.

Sip time per well	Estimated cell events acquired per well	Inter-well shake frequency	Inter-well shake duration	Acquisition time per plate
4 seconds	1800	Every 6 wells	4 s	~16 min
6 seconds	2700	Every 6 wells	4 s	~20 min
8 seconds (default)	3600	Every 6 wells	4 s	~25 min
10 seconds	4500	Every 3 wells	4 s	~30 min
12 seconds	5400	Every 3 wells	4 s	~30 min

Table 7. Data acquisition adjustments for 384-well format.

Sip time per well	Culture plate cell density	Sample transfer volume	Final volume (following resuspension)	Estimated cell density in assay plate	Estimated acquired volume*
4 seconds (default)	1×10^6 cells/mL	10 µL (from culture plate to assay plate)	15 µL (10 µL + residual volume)	0.5×10^6 cells /mL (assuming 20% loss during wash)	6 µL
6 seconds					9 µL
8 seconds					12 µL

* Assuming a 1.5 µL/s sip per well.

Sip time per well	Estimated cell events acquired per well	Inter-well shake frequency	Inter-well shake duration	Acquisition time per plate
4 seconds (default)	3000	Every 6 wells	4 s	~45 min
6 seconds	4500	Every 6 wells	4 s	~60 min
8 seconds	6000	Every 4 wells	4 s	~75 min

12.7 How to ensure sample cytokines are within the linear range of the standard curves

The ForeCyt® template defaults to 4PL with $1/Y^2$ weighting for the standard curves. ForeCyt® can provide the linear range for each standard curve. Use a 1:3 serial titration with the top concentrations at 50,000 pg/mL and 200,000 pg/mL for IFNγ and Granzyme B, respectively. If adjustments for concentration, dilution factor, or plate layout for the standard are necessary, refer to the ForeCyt® Reference Guide and make the adjustment in the Design section. The use of a different culture medium may have a slight impact on the standard curve linear range.

Section 13. Appendices

13.1 Appendix A: Proliferation and Encoding Dye protocol for target cells

The following protocol uses the Cell Proliferation and Encoding Dye V/Blue (Tag-it Violet™) to multiplex the target cells by cell encoding. The assay template provided in the USB drive in the kit includes the compensation metrics for the dye detection channel, VL1 in iQue®3 (VBR) and iQue® Screener PLUS (VBR). Below are instructions for encoding target cells using the Cell Proliferation and Encoding Dye V/Blue (Tag-it Violet™):

a. The Cell Proliferation and Encoding Dye V/Blue (Tag-it Violet™) is provided in individual-use vials that should be stored at -20°C upon receipt. Do not open vials until needed.

b. To encode target cells, bring one vial to room temperature, and spin down the vial of lyophilized reagent in a microcentrifuge to ensure the reagent is at the bottom of the vial.

c. Reconstitute one vial of lyophilized Cell Proliferation and Encoding Dye V/Blue (Tag-it Violet™) with 50 µl of anhydrous DMSO until fully dissolved to make a 5 mM solution.

d. Prepare a Working dye stock by diluting the Cell Proliferation and Encoding Dye (V/Blue) in HBSS buffer or PBS buffer (dilution factor 1:1250), and protect from light. The HBSS or PBS buffer must be protein-free. Select one buffer and use it consistently across the protocol when it is required.

e. Collect target cells in a 50 mL conical tube. Spin cells down (500 xg, 5 minutes) and remove the original culture medium.

f. Wash cells one time by resuspending cells in 20 mL protein-free HBSS or PBS. Spin cells down (500 xg, 5 minutes), and remove the supernatant. Resuspend cells in protein-free HBSS or PBS at 1-4 million/mL.

g. Combine an equal volume of the prepared cells and the prepared Working dye stock. The final dye concentration in the staining tube will be 1:2500 diluted. Thoroughly mix, and incubate the cells at 37°C for 15 minutes. Tube should be covered with a lid and protected from light.

h. After staining, wash cells by adding at least 2x volume of pre-warmed, complete culture medium (with 10% serum) to the staining sample. Spin (500 xg, 5 minutes). Remove the supernatant, and resuspend cells manually in the residual liquid.

i. Repeat wash (described in step h.) two more times.

j. After the final wash, carefully resuspend cells at the desired cell density for the co-culture/assay. Figure 13 illustrates gating to separate the target and effector cells acquired by iQue®3 (VBR) or iQue® Screener PLUS (VBR) after co-culture.

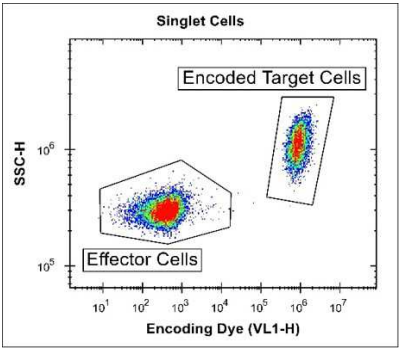


Figure 13. Gating example to identify Target cells from Singlet Cells population. Target cells are stained with Cell Proliferation and Encoding Dye V/Blue (Tag-it Violet™), followed by co-culture with Effector cells.

13.2 Appendix B: Options for improving cell event acquisition

Option 1: Adjust acquisition sip time (See **Section 12**, Best practices and tips).

Option 2: Concentrate cell samples in the original culture plate prior to performing assay.

a. Spin down cells (300 xg, 5 minutes) in the original culture plate.
b. Remove up to half of the supernatant to double the cell density in the culture well.
c. Resuspend cells in the culture plate by pipetting the sample up and down (5-6 times) in the remaining supernatant.
d. Transfer the concentrated cell samples to the assay plate before running the assay.

Option 3: Use cell-repellent or ultra-low binding plates to prevent cell attachment.

Some user-defined biological conditions may cause partial attachment of cells to the assay well surface, resulting in inconsistent cell count. To achieve a more precise cell count, use cell-repellent plates (e.g., Greiner #651970 or Greiner #781970) or ultra-low attachment plates (e.g., Corning #7007 or Corning #4516). To add new plate models into ForeCyt®, click on Device → Manage Plate Models → Add.

Option 4: Run daily volumetric calibration to get more precise cell density data.

Running a daily volumetric calibration on the iQue®3 (VBR) or iQue® Screener PLUS (VBR) using SPHERO™ AccuCount beads (Spherotech #ACBP-50-10) is recommended if precise cell density information is required. This product has an absolute count per volume unit.

a. Follow the Spherotech protocol to mix and transfer the beads to a testing plate.

b. Mimic the run protocol in the Human NK Cell Mediated Killing Kit by using the same plate type, sample volume, and sip time

c. Measure the sip volume by sampling at least three wells of AccuCount beads.

d. Use this volume measurement to calculate the cell density.

e. Adjust the final calculation by considering the sip time (in ForeCyt® Protocol) and the sample dilution in the final assay reaction volume.

13.3 Appendix C: Pipette recommendations

Multi-channel pipettes

- Manual 12-channel pipette, Tacta®, 5-120 µL (Sartorius)
- Manual 12-channel pipette, Tacta®, 30-300 µL (Sartorius)
- Electronic 12-channel pipette, Picus®, 5-120 µL (Sartorius)
- Electronic 12-channel pipette, Picus®, 10-300 µL (Sartorius)

Single-channel pipettes

- Manual single-channel pipette, Tacta® (Sartorius)
- Electronic single-channel pipette, Picus® (Sartorius)

13.4 Appendix D: Multiplexing Additional Cytokines with the Human NK Cell Mediated Killing Kit

Human NK Cell Companion Kits may be used in combination with the Human NK Cell Mediated Killing Kit to allow measurement of up to 6 additional human cytokines/effector proteins along with IFNγ and Granzyme B which are already included in the Human NK Cell Mediated Killing Kit. The additional cytokines/effector proteins include: Human MIP-1α (Cat. 97089), RANTES (Cat. 97090), GM-CSF (Cat. 97091), CD178/Fas Ligand (Cat. 97092), Granzyme A (Cat. 97093), and TNF (Cat. 97094). Each Human NK Cell Companion Kit contains the reagent volumes needed to run a 1 x 384-well format or 2 x 96-well format of the Human NK Cell Mediated Killing Kit. Additional Human NK Cell Companion Kits are needed for use with 5 x 96-well format and 5 x 384-well format of the Human NK Cell Mediated Killing Kit.

Contents of Human NK Cell Companion Kit:

- 1 vial of lyophilized Cytokine Standard
- 1 vial of Cytokine Capture Beads
- 1 vial of Cytokine Detection Reagent

Follow the instructions below to combine reagents from the Human NK Cell Mediated Killing and Human NK Cell Companion Kits and run the assay.

a. Combine Cytokine Standards - Combine the Cytokine Standard from each additional Human NK Cell Companion Kit selected with the Cytokine Standards already included in the Human NK Cell Mediated Killing Kit.

    i. After combining all standards in a single tube, perform standard reconstitution and titration as described in **Section 9** above or Quick Guides in **Section 1**.

b. Combine Cytokine Capture Beads — Combine the Human NK Cell Companion Cytokine Capture Beads with the Cytokine Capture Beads Cocktail provided in the Human NK Cell Mediated Killing Kit.

    i. Vortex the Human NK Cell Companion Kit Cytokine Capture Beads for at least 15 seconds.

    ii. Add the appropriate amount of Cytokine Capture Beads from each additional Human NK Cell Companion Kit to the pre-mixed Cytokine Capture Beads Cocktail included in the Human NK Cell Mediated Killing Kit. Use volumes listed in **Table 8** below for your specific Human NK Cell Mediated Killing Kit type and configuration.

c. Combine Cytokine Detection Reagents –Combine the Human NK Cell Companion Cytokine Detection Reagent with the Cytokine Detection Cocktail provided in the Human NK Cell Mediated Killing Kit.

    i. Add the appropriate amount of Cytokine Detection Reagent from each additional Human NK Cell Companion Kit selected to the pre-mixed Cytokine Detection Cocktail included in the Human NK Cell Mediated Killing Kit. Use volumes listed in **Table 8** below for your specific Human NK Cell Mediated Killing Kit type and configuration.

d. Perform the Assay – Follow the assay protocol for your particular Human NK Cell Mediated Killing Kit and configuration as described in **Section 10** above or the Quick Guides in **Section 1**.

Table 8. Volumes of NK Cell Companion Kit Cytokine Capture Beads and Cytokine Detection Reagent to add to the Cytokine Capture Beads Cocktail or Cytokine Detection Cocktail provided in the Human NK Cell Mediated Killing Kit.

For each additional Human NK Cell Companion Kit, add volumes listed below to the respective cocktail vial provided in the Human NK Cell Mediated Killing Kit		
Human NK Cell Mediated Killing Kit format	**Human NK Cell Companion Kit Cytokine Capture Beads (µL)** **(Add to the Cytokine Capture Beads Cocktail)**	**Human NK Cell Companion Kit Cytokine Detection Reagent (µL)** **(Add to the Cytokine Detection Cocktail)**
1 × 96-wells	40 µL /vial	40 µL /vial
5 × 96-wells	40 µL /vial	40 µL /vial
1 × 384-wells	95 µL /vial	95 µL /vial
5 × 384-wells	95 µL/vial	95 µL/vial

NOTE: Add the appropriate amount of Cytokine Capture Beads or Cytokine Detection Reagent from each additional Human NK Cell Companion Kit selected to the pre-mixed Cytokine Capture Beads Cocktail or Cytokine Detection Cocktail provided in your specific Human NK Cell Mediated Killing Kit configuration. Each Human NK Cell Companion Kit contains the reagent volumes needed to run a 1 x 384-well format or 2 x 96-well format of the Human NK Cell Mediated Killing Kit. Additional Human NK Cell Companion Kits are needed for use with 5 x 96-well format and 5 x 384-well format of the Human NK Cell Mediated Killing Kit.

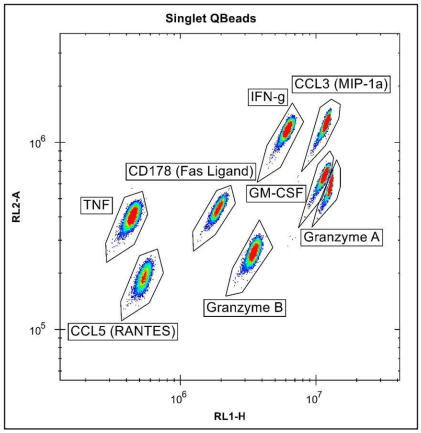


Figure 14: Human NK Cell Companion Kit template.

NOTE: The templates from the specific Human NK Cell Mediated Killing Kit do not have the appropriate gating for the companion kit beads. Use the Human NK Cell Companion Kit template for the full gating of all 8 cytokine beads. The Human NK Cell Companion Kits can only work with the Human NK Cell Mediated Killing Kit.

13.5 Appendix E: FAQ

Q1: Can I apply the standard curves acquired from one day to another day's experiment for cytokine quantitation?

A1: Standard curves should be run on each day of the assay, and applied only to experiment plates run on the same day. This eliminates potential day-to-day variation that may affect cytokine quantitation. Standards can be included in-plate or run as a stand-alone plate. For in-plate standards, cytokine quantitation is automatically included in the ForeCyt® template. When standards are prepared in a stand-alone plate, cytokine quantification can be achieved by sharing the standard curve fit to other assay plates in ForeCyt®. Once the curve fit has been shared, cytokine quantitation can be performed using the Derived Concentration advanced metric. More information on the Share Fit feature and calculating a derived concentration from a shared curve can be found in the ForeCyt® Reference Guide.

Q2: Can I use fixatives in my samples?

A2: Samples may be fixed with certain fixatives (e.g., 1% PFA) however it is important to understand how fixation may affect biological outcomes. The use of methanol for fixation is highly discouraged as it affects bead-based cytokine detection. Fixation and further wash steps may cause cell loss and affect the final event acquisition, and therefore, warrant additional optimization. If significant cell loss is observed, perform the fixation in a cell-repellent plate (e.g., Greiner #651970 or Greiner #781970), which may reduce cell loss due to fixation or fixation-related cell cross-linking to the well bottom.

Q3: Can I use a 1 x 384-well kit to run 96-well plate assay? How many 96-well plates can I run?

A3: Yes. A 1x384-well kit can be used for 2 assay plates in a 96-well format. Both 1 x 96-well kits and 1 x 384-well kits provide 1 vial of each Cytokine Standard. Additional standards are also available for purchase. For all kits, both 96- and 384-well ForeCyt® templates are provided.

Q4: Can I multiplex this assay with other cellular or cytokine endpoints?

A4: We DO NOT recommend multiplexing this assay with other cellular endpoints. The ForeCyt® template includes a compensation matrix that accounts for these measurements without a need for additional adjustments. Additional cytokine endpoints are possible when combined with NK Cell Companion Kits (See **Appendix D**).

Q5: Why do I get very few capture beads and/or cells from the sample in data acquisition?

A5: If capture beads and cell numbers are low following sample acquisition, increase the sip time and re-read the plate. Each well should yield greater than 50 capture beads for each bead-based population. A number of situations could be responsible:

- Capture beads have not been agitated adequately in their original vial.
- Capture beads were not mixed in the reservoir during transfer to the assay plate.
- The sample was not agitated in the residual buffer liquid after the final centrifugation and aspiration step.
- Capture beads were washed away or lost during the aspiration steps.

For low cell counts, consider the following possibilities:

- Cell proliferation/viability was affected during sample preparation
- Cells were not mixed before transferring cell/supernatant sample from the culture plate to assay plate.
- The sample was not agitated in the residual buffer after the final centrifugation and aspiration step.
- Cells were washed away or lost during aspiration steps.

Q6: I may have some well cross-contamination. What could be the causes?

A6: There are several assay steps that may have caused well cross-contamination:

- Pipette tips touched samples in the well and were used for reagent transfer for other wells. Be sure to change pipette tips at each reagent addition.
- Use of the strong shake (3,000 RPM) for brief shake (2,000 RPM). Ensure that shake speeds are as described in the assay protocol.

Q7: Do I need to dilute my samples for the assay if my samples have high cytokine levels?

A7: Diluting samples is appropriate when cytokine levels are beyond the linear range of the standard curve. When diluting samples, consider adjusting the sip-time to assure enough cellular events are collected for analyses. Alternatively, the co-culture plate can be spun and a sample of supernatant (without cells) collected, diluted and analyzed separately for up to 30 different human cytokines/effector proteins using additional QBeads® kits.

Q8: What if I don't have access to an automated plate washer for liquid aspiration step?

A8: If you don't have access to the plate washer, you may carefully and slowly aspirate the liquid in the assay well with a manual multi-channel pipette. The pipette tips should be at 45 degree against the wall of assay well and try to avoid touching the cell/bead pellet at the well bottom. Make sure to change tips after each liquid aspiration step in order to avoid well cross-contamination.

Another option to aspirate the liquid in the assay well is to quickly flick the assay plate into a sink. This is a one-time flick, with force. DO NOT flick the plate repeatedly. After plate flicking, wipe the liquid on the top of the plate with a tissue paper. Make sure to bleach your waste liquid in the sink, if necessary.

All above techniques may need some practice and testing, and may result in sample loss and more variability in the assay.

Q9: Why do I sometimes get cell membrane integrity/live cell readings from wells which only contain capture beads (e.g. wells designated for cytokine standards)?

A9: These cell membrane integrity readings are usually caused by very few stray events. You may use the plate view option of live cells as a QC to verify that the observed cell numbers are low. These stray events can be considered background noise, and we suggest you exclude the wells designated as standards when viewing heat maps containing live cell data to eliminate any confusion.

Q10: Can I use this assay to measure secreted proteins in human sera?
A10: This assay is only optimized for cell culture samples, and is not optimized to measure secreted proteins in human sera. If you need to measure the same proteins from human sera samples, you may purchase QBeads® kits which include a special diluent for human sera samples. The QBeads® kits for human sera samples may NOT be multiplexed with any of the Human Immune Cell Mediated Killing Kits.

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