



Figure 4-44. Cervical mucus formed under the influence of estradiol assumes a fern-like appearance when allowed to air-dry (crystallize) on a microscope slide (the mucus contains glycoproteins that in vivo become arranged into parallel chains that create channels through which sperm cells can migrate; during the luteal phase, secretion of mucus is sparse and macromolecules form a dense meshwork that inhibits sperm transport). The "ferning" method can be used to monitor for upcoming ovulation.