The Normal Salivary Gland Aspirate

General Diagnostic Approach

Using the algorithm (Fig. 4.1), specimens of normal salivary gland tissue and its mimics should meet minimal specimen adequacy requirements and be composed of a predominance of benign acinar cells and occasional other normal salivary gland elements. Depending upon the nature of the underlying lesion, aspirates of normal salivary gland tissue and its mimics are usually mildly to moderately cellular. Features suggestive of a neoplasm, cyst, or inflammatory lesion are absent (Fig. 4.1). Using this approach, both normal salivary glands as well as a variety of pathologic entities are included in the differential diagnosis. Beware: sampling error is one of the more common causes of an aspirate of normal salivary gland tissue!

Cytologic Features of Normal Salivary Gland

Aspirates of normal salivary gland tissue are variably cellular, composed of small groups of acinar cells, occasional ductal cells, and admixed fibroadipose tissue (Fig. 4.2). Acinar cells are present in cohesive grapelike clusters with polarization of the constituent cells and with associated inconspicuous tubules and small honeycomb sheets of ductal cells (Fig. 4.3). It may be necessary to search carefully at high magnification to discern the small groups of intercalated ductal cells tightly associated with the acinar cell
Fig. 4.1. Algorithmic approach to aspirates containing normal salivary gland tissue.