

Chapter 2

Histology of the Parotid Gland

ABSTRACT

This chapter describes the characteristic histological features of the parotid gland. The microanatomy of the parotid gland includes the following: stroma (connective tissue) and parenchyma (secretory units or acini, myoepithelial cells, and ductal units). The secretory cells are organized into secretory units or acini, which are lined exclusively by serous cells. Myoepithelial cells are the contractile elements with secretory end pieces and intercalated ducts. The acini are drained by a series of ducts which eventually drain into the major excretory duct (Stensen's duct). Aging of salivary glands show some structural changes, but with no overall change in the amount of saliva secreted with advancing age.

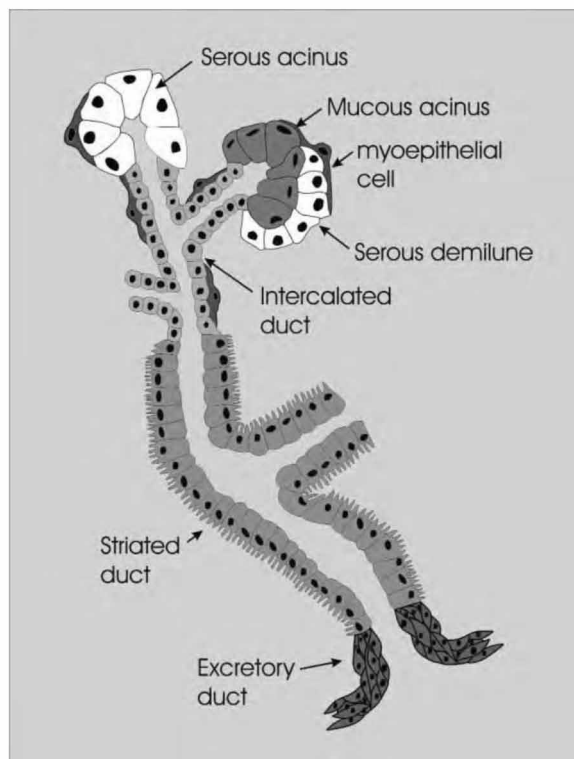
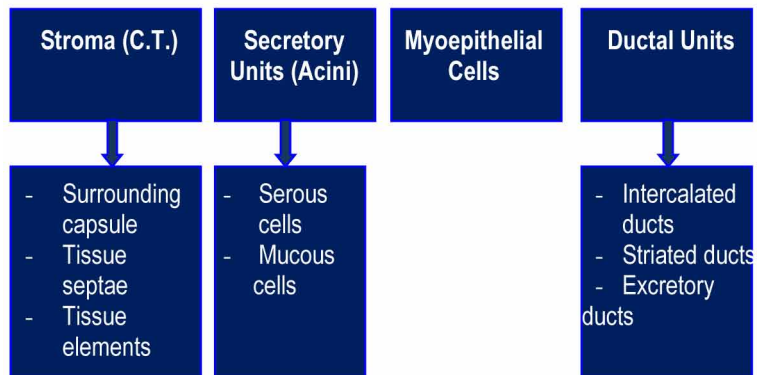
INTRODUCTION

All glands in general are derived from epithelial cells and consist of *parenchyma* (secretory unit and associated ducts) and *stroma* (surrounding connective tissue that penetrates and divides the gland into lobules). The parotid gland (exocrine) secretes saliva via ducts from a flask-like, blind-ended secretory structure called *acinus*. Thus, the microanatomy of the parotid gland includes the following: connective tissue (stroma), secretory units (acini), myoepithelial cells and ductal units as shown in Figure 1.

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Figure 1. Microanatomy of the salivary glandular tissue



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