Medical Immunology

University Medicine · Vocabulary in context

Word	Example
medical immunology	**Medical immunology** studies the body's defences.
complement /ˈkɒmplɪmənt/	**Complement** proteins punch holes in bacteria.
phagocyte /ˈfægəsaɪt/	A **phagocyte** is a white blood cell that swallows bacteria.
neutrophil /ˈnjuːtrəfɪl/	A **neutrophil** is a white blood cell that eats bacteria.
macrophage /ˈmækrəfɪdʒ/	A **macrophage** is a large phagocyte that shows bits of the bacteria to other cells.
natural killer cell	A **natural killer cell** kills infected cells without needing antibodies.
dendritic cell	A **dendritic cell** carries pieces of a germ to T cells.
diapedesis	In **diapedesis**, white blood cells squeeze out through the vessel wall.
antibody /ˈæntɪbɒdi/	An **antibody** sticks to a matching antigen on a germ.
T-cell receptor	A **T-cell receptor** recognises a small piece of protein held by MHC.
major histocompatibility complex	The **major histocompatibility complex** shows pieces of proteins on the cell surface.

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clonal selection /ˈklaʊnl sɪˈlekʃn/	**Clonal selection**: only the lymphocytes whose receptors are complementary to the antigen are activated.
affinity maturation	In **affinity maturation**, antibodies get better at binding over time.
co-stimulation	**Co-stimulation** is the second signal a T cell needs before it becomes active.
regulatory T cell	A **regulatory T cell** calms other immune cells down.
immune memory	**Immune memory** lets the body fight the same germ faster the second time.
herd immunity /hɜːd ɪˈmjuːnɪti/	When most people are vaccinated, **herd immunity** protects the rest.
hypersensitivity	An allergy is a kind of **hypersensitivity**: the immune system overreacts.
central tolerance	**Central tolerance** removes cells that attack the body while they are still developing.
peripheral tolerance	**Peripheral tolerance** switches off harmful cells that escaped.
molecular mimicry	In **molecular mimicry**, a germ looks like body tissue, so the immune system attacks both.
immunodeficiency	A person with **immunodeficiency** gets infections very easily.