Immunologic Therapies Encyclopedia Article

Immunologic Therapies

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Immunologic Therapies

Immunologic therapy is the treatment of disease using medicines that boost the body's natural immune response.

It is used to improve the **immune system**'s natural ability to fight diseases such as **cancer**, **hepatitis**, and **AIDS**. These drugs also may be used to help the body recover from the harmful side effects of treatments such as **chemotherapy**.

Most drugs in this category are manufactured versions of substances the body produces naturally. In their natural forms, these substances help defend the body against disease. For example, aldesleukin (Proleukin) is an artificially made form of interleukin-2, which helps white blood cells work. Another type of drug, epoetin (Epogen, Procrit), stimulates the bone marrow to make new red blood cells. It is an artificially made version of human erythropoietin, which is made naturally in the body and has the same effect on bone marrow.

Most of these drugs come in an injectable form, and the recommended dosage depends on the type of immunologic therapy. For some medicines, the physician will decide the dosage for each patient, taking into account the patient's weight and whether he or she is taking other medicines. Some drugs used in immunologic therapy are given only in a hospital, under a physician's supervision. Some, the patients may give themselves under the guidance of a doctor or pharmacist.