Allergy-immunology glossary

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Towards a clear designation of some of the terms used in allergology and immunology.

| Natural killer (NK) cells | NK cells account for up to 15% of peripheral blood lymphocytes. They are important effectors of the innate immune system, cytokine production to regulate hematopoiesis and finally link the innate to the adaptive immune response through a bidirectional cross-talk with dendritic cells. Accordingly, they can lyse tumor and virally infected cells without prior sensitization and spare normal cells that express adequate levels of MHC of class I molecules (MHC-I). NK cells are subdivided into various subsets based on the relative expression of CD16 and CD56. The CD56dimCD16bright population is predominant in peripheral blood, whereas CD56brightCD16−/dim are predominantly found in secondary lymphoid tissue. CD56brightCD16−/dim are cytokine producers endowed with immunoregulatory properties, but they can also become cytotoxic upon appropriate activation. These cells were shown to play a role in different disease states, such as cancer, autoimmunity, neuroinflammation, and infection. |
| CD8+ T cytolytic cells (Tc) | The primary function of Tc cells is to eradicate infected and tumor cells. Upon activation and differentiation of naïve CD8+ T cells to effector CD8+ T cells, cytotoxic T lymphocytes (CTL) synthesize large amounts of the inflammatory cytokines IFNγ and TNF, and the cytotoxic effector molecules perforin and granzyme B, which are deposited in lytic granules in the cytosol. |

REFERENCES