

The body's defense against disease



Sometimes the body's immune system fails to do its job correctly.

Allergies to pollen

When pollen gets in anybody's nose the immune system recognizes the pollen as something that does not belong in the body and the immune system overreacts.



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Rheumatoid Arthritis (autoimmune disease)

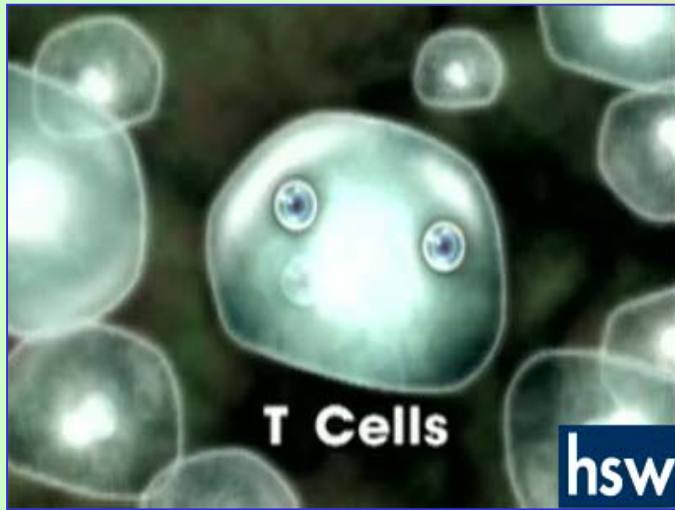
The immune system mistakes certain cells in the body as enemy invaders and attacks them. It attacks cells around finger joints, knees and other joints.

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)

The most serious threat related to the immune system comes when the immune system itself is attacked and weakened.



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Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)

HIV attacks the immune system itself by infecting white blood cells called T cells

When HIV invades T cells, it reproduces and weakens these cells, often destroying them.

It does not happen quickly. Often more than 10 years after being infected, so many T cells are destroyed that the immune system is seriously weakened.



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Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)

Because the immune system is weakened, the body is no longer able to fight off infections and cancers. At this point, the person has AIDS.

It is diseases like cancer and pneumonia that, taking advantage of the weakened immune system, eventually cause death.

At the moment, there is no cure for AIDS and there is no vaccine that can prevent it.



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Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)

Fortunately, HIV can not be passed from one person to the next by casual contact; it is not like a flu virus, for example.

There are only three ways that you can get the HIV virus:

- sharing needles
- intimate sexual contact
- through blood.

Video:

<http://videos.howstuffworks.com/hsw/17042-the-bodys-defense-against-disease-a-closer-look-video.htm>