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RECIRCULATION OF NAIVE T LYMPHOCYTES

Abstract: After development in the thymus, naive T lymphocytes come into circulation and continuously recirculate between the blood and peripheral lymphoid organs for activation and transformation into effector cells. The movement of naive T lymphocytes represents an ordered sequence controlled by the expression of specific proteins (selectin, integrin and chemokine) that includes the recruitment of circulating lymphocytes on the luminal surface of the blood vessel, transendothelial transition and migration within the extravascular compartment of peripheral lymphoid organs.

The question of the movement of naive T lymphocytes in and out of non-lymphoid organs in physiological conditions has not been fully resolved. There is an opinion that naive T lymphocytes under physiological conditions routinely access almost all non-lymphoid organs for the purpose of immunosurveillance and/or tolerance induction.

Non-lymphoid organs burdened by chronic inflammation and tumor processes may possess a significant number of naive T lymphocytes. Organized lymphoid tissue causally contributes to the persistence of certain autoimmune diseases. Recruitment in tumor tissue and subsequent antitumor immune response correspond with a positive prognosis.

Keywords: naive T lymphocytes, primary immune response

Naive T lymphocytes

T lymphocytes are lymphocytes that participate in immune reactions by directly killing cells that express a specific antigen for them, and by producing and secreting lymphokines by which they control the activity of other leukocytes¹. They express clonally distributed, polymorphic T cell receptors (TCR) that detect peptide fragments of protein antigens presented as part of major histocompatibility complex (MHC) molecules².

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Naïve T lymphocytes are immature T lymphocytes that have successfully completed positive and negative selection in the thymus but have not made contact with the antigen³. They have small cytoplasm, slow metabolism and are unable to produce pro-inflammatory cytokines⁴. They express L selectin (CD62L), chemokine receptor 7 (CCR7), CD45RA (TEMRA), CD127 and CD132, but not markers of previous activation, including human histocompatibility leukocyte antigen class II (HLA-DR), CD25, CD44, CD69, CD45RO³⁻⁵.

Naïve T lymphocytes represent a heterogeneous population⁵. Thymus function, age and total number of T cells cause significant differences in phenotype, dynamics, location, function and differentiation status⁵. In the first years of life, most of the naïve T lymphocytes are produced in the thymus^{3,4,6}. Insufficient thymopoiesis in adulthood is compensated by peripheral proliferation of T lymphocytes^{3,4,6}. Homeostatic survival is enabled by MHC-II class molecules, interleukin 4 (English Interleukin-4, IL-4) and IL-7^{4,6}. The life expectancy of naïve T lymphocytes is from 6 to 10 years⁴.

Activation of naïve T lymphocytes in response to antigen and their subsequent proliferation and differentiation represents the primary immune response⁷⁻⁹. Simultaneously with the provision of effector T cells, the primary immune response creates immune memory, which provides protection against subsequent exposure to the same pathogen¹.

Recirculation of naïve T lymphocytes in peripheral lymphoid organs

After development in the thymus, naïve T lymphocytes reach the circulation and continuously recirculate between the blood and peripheral lymphoid organs (PNO) in order to be activated by antigens and transformed into effector cells⁹. The movement of lymphocytes represents an ordered sequence that begins with the recruitment of circulating lymphocytes on the luminal surface of the blood vessel (including the interaction of lymphocytes with the endothelium, their rolling and finally firm adhesion to the inside of the blood vessel)^{10,11}. This is followed by intravascular migration of luminally adhered lymphocytes (translocation from the initial binding site to the corresponding exit site), transendothelial transition and migration within the extravascular compartment in the parenchyma^{10,11}. The recruitment of naïve T lymphocytes takes place predominantly in post-capillary venules (HEV) of lymph nodes (LN)¹². HEVs have a characteristic morphology, a thickened apical glycocalyx and a basal lamina with fibroblastic reticular cells (FRC)¹². In addition, the endothelium of HEV expresses molecules from the peripheral lymph node addressin family (PNAd), which are ligands for L-selectin (Figure 1)^{12,13}.

The PNAd family includes Glycosylation-dependent cell adhesion molecule-1 (GlyCAM-1) 4, sialylated glycoprotein of 200 kDa (sgp200), podocalyxin, endomucin and nepmucin 13. PNAd ligands undergo sialylation, glycosylation, fucosylation of branched O-glycan and sulfation of 6 Sialyl-Lewis X tetrasaccharides (Figure 2)¹³.

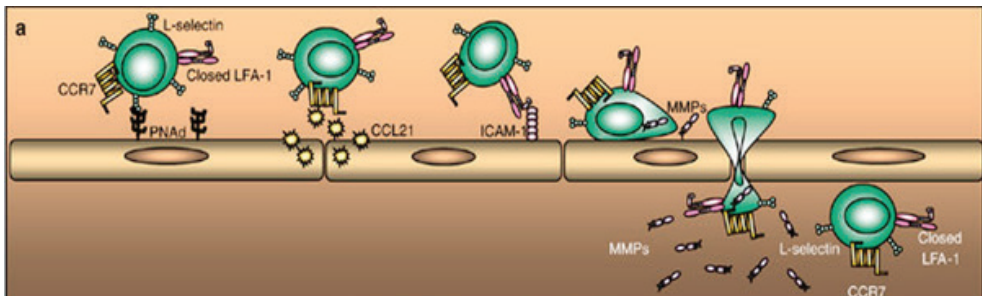
HEV endothelium in intestinal lymphoid tissues, mesenteric lymph nodes and spleen endothelium express Mucosal vascular Addressin Cell Adhesion Molecule 1, MAdCAM-¹¹⁴⁻¹⁶. MAdCAM-1 is a type I transmembrane glycoprotein from the immunoglobulin superfamily that possesses two immunoglobulin-like domains and a mucin-like domain¹⁴⁻¹⁶. The mucin-like domain (rich in serine and threonine) represents the ligand of L selectin^{14,15}.

L-selectin belongs to the selectin family, structurally similar cell adhesion molecules, which includes both E-selectin and P-selectin (CD62E and CD62P)¹⁷. L-selectin is a type I transmembrane glycoprotein expressed on naïve T lymphocytes¹⁷. It is composed of an N-terminal, calcium-dependent lectin domain, a domain similar to Epidermal Growth Factor (EGF), two short repeating parts (SCR) homologous to complementary regulatory proteins, a transmembrane domain and cytoplasmic tail^{18,19}. L-selectin mediates binding and rolling of naïve leukocytes¹². The binding process predominantly takes place on carbohydrate epitopes of the lectin domain, although EGF and SCR domains can also participate in it²⁰. It requires a high degree of analogy with endothelial glycoprotein HEV ligands^{21,22}. The reversible and short-lived bond causes a gentle rolling in the flow direction and interaction with immobilized chemokines²². Lymphoid chemokines CCL21 and CCL19 represent a protein with a mass of 8 to 14 kilodaltons²³. They belong to the group of CC chemokines characterized by two cysteine residues in the NH₂-terminal motif²³. CCL21 and CCL19 are produced by LN and spleen stromal cells²³. CCL21 is also expressed in high HEV and lymphatic vessels²⁴. Lymphoid chemokines bind to the CC chemokine receptor 7, expressed on the surface of naïve T cells and mature dendritic cells (DCs)²⁴. The interaction of CCL21 (and probably CCL19) of HEV with CCR7 enables the conformational change of lymphocyte function-associated antigen 1 (LFA-1)⁹.

LFA-1 integrin is a glycosylated heterodimeric molecule expressed on the surface of naïve T lymphocytes²⁵. It is composed of α and β subunits (type I transmembrane proteins), which include long extracellular domains, a transmembrane domain and mostly short cytoplasmic domains^{10,25}. The extracellular domain has an inserted (eng. Inserted, I) ligand binding domain of intracellular adhesion molecule 1 (eng. intracellular adhesion receptor 1, ICAM-1) for strong adherence of the intracellular adhesion molecule 1 (eng. Intercellular Adhesion Molecule 1, ICAM 1) to the luminal surface HEV¹⁸.

In naïve T lymphocytes, LFA-1 is predominantly in a folded conformational form¹⁰. Upon activation of CCR7 G-protein-coupled receptor (GPCR) in the presence of chemokines, the latent form of LFA-1 changes to an intermediate configuration (I domain of moderate affinity)¹⁰. In physiologically perfused microvessels, LFA-1 is rapidly stabilized into a fully active form with a high-affinity I domain that interacts with ICAM-1 to mediate arrest of naïve T lymphocytes on ICAM-1¹⁰.

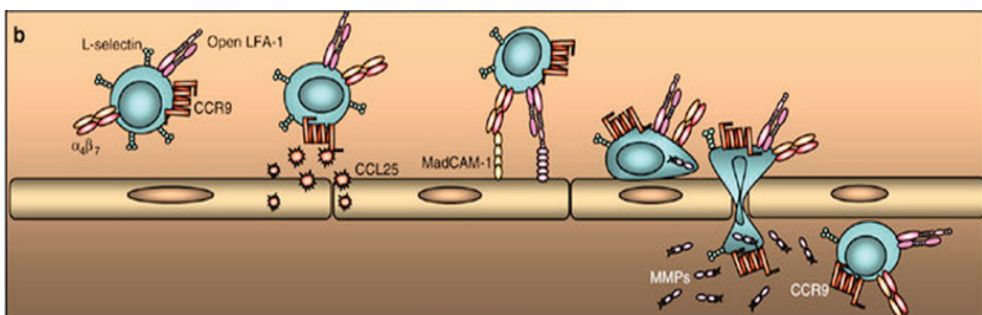
Figure 1. Migration of naïve T lymphocytes to lymph nodes



Taken from: Lewis M, Tarlton JF, Cose S. Memory versus naïve T-cell migration. *Immunol Cell Biol.* 2008 Mar-Apr; 86(3): 226–31

Migration of naïve T lymphocytes in intestinal lymphoid tissues requires the interaction of the constitutively expressed integrin of naïve T lymphocytes, $\alpha 4 \beta 7$, and MADCAM-1 HEV¹⁶. On the other hand, migration in mesenteric lymph nodes implies sequential and synergistic activity of PNAd and $\alpha 4 \beta 7$ ¹⁶. The PNAd/L selectin interaction induces the initial rolling and adhesion of naïve T lymphocytes, while the $\alpha 4 \beta 7$ /MADCAM-1 complex enables firm adhesion and transmigration¹⁶. Migration of naïve T lymphocytes in the spleen is facilitated by angiotensin II (angiotensin II/AT1 axis)¹⁶.

Figure 2. Migration of naïve T lymphocytes in intestinal lymphoid tissues



Taken from: Lewis M, Tarlton JF, Cose S. Memory versus naïve T-cell migration. *Immunol Cell Biol.* 2008 Mar-Apr; 86(3): 226–31

Increased concentration of angiotensin II in the spleen induces lymphocyte expression of L-selectin and CCR9, and production of CCL19 and CCL25 in the spleen¹⁶.

After the tight binding of naïve T lymphocytes, they begin to move between the intercellular junctions of endothelial cells⁹. Lymphocyte chemoattractants (CCL19, CCL21 and CXCL12) expressed on the surface of FRC promote HEV migration and retention of naïve T lymphocytes in the deep paracortex of LN through their ligation for CCR7 and CXC Chemokine Receptor 4 (CXC Motif Chemokine Receptor 4, CXCR4)²⁶⁻²⁸. Upon exiting the HEV, the FRC network provides a pathway to migrate within the LN paracortex according to chemokine gradients²⁶. In addition, FRCs produce IL-7 which promotes the survival and homeostasis of naïve T cells in the deep paracortex²⁸. DC, professional antigen-presenting cells (APC), like naïve T lymphocytes, use the FRC conduit system, which increases potential interactions (estimated interaction of naïve T cells with DC is 500/h)^{27,29}. DC migration is conditioned by the chemokine gradient and by the interaction of the C-type lectin-like receptor 2 (CLEC-2) DC with podoplanin, also known as glycoprotein 38 (gp38)²⁹. CLEC-2-gp38 interaction results in polymerization of DC actin (expansion, protrusion and migration of DC along the FRC) as well as inhibition of gp38 signaling (relaxation of the actomyosin cytoskeleton and consequent expansion of the FRC)²³.

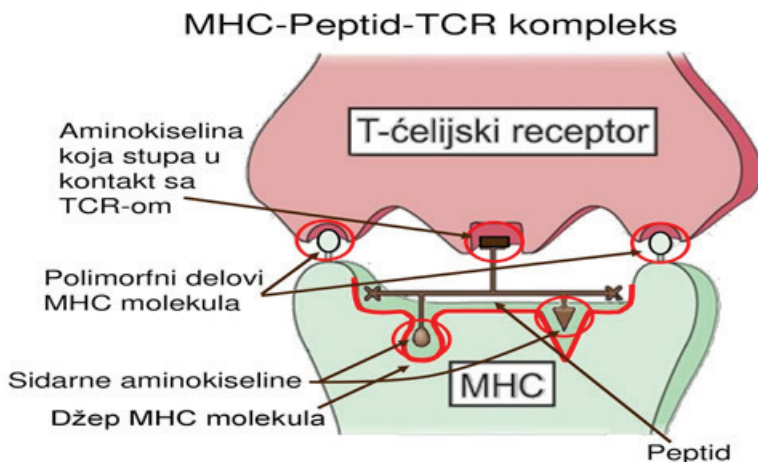
Intracellular proteins are presented as part of MHC class I molecules²⁸. Extracellular proteins are presented by MHC class II molecules APC²⁹.

Inside the lymph node, naïve T lymphocytes spend from 8 to 12 hours²⁸. They move at a speed of about 11-14 μ per minute³. On the other hand DCs travel at a speed of about 3-6 μ per minute and then stop³. In the presence of antigen, naïve T lymphocytes interact with DC can be transient (3-11 min) or stable (several hours), depending on the affinity for the antigen³.

The complex of antigen and MHC molecules is recognized by T cell receptor (T-cell receptor, TCR) and coreceptor²⁹. Activation of naïve T lymphocytes requires TCR binding to the peptide-MHC complex (signal 1) as well as the interaction of costimulatory molecules at the interface between naïve T lymphocytes and DCs (B7/CD28, LFA-1/ICAM-1 and ICAM2, CD2/LFA-3) (signal 2) (Figure 3)²⁹.

The signaling pathways of activation of naïve T lymphocytes include: nuclear factor of activated T cells (NFAT), RAS/RAC mitogen-activated protein kinase, protein kinase C, RAS/RAC MAP kinase), protein kinase C (eng. protein kinase C, PKC θ), nuclear factor κ B (eng. nuclear factor- κ B, NF- κ B), Phosphatidylinositol-3 kinase pathway and tuberous sclerosis complex (eng. tuberous sclerosis complex, TSC)^{8,30}.

Figure 3. Model of recognition of peptide antigen complex and MHC molecule by T cell receptor



Taken from: Abbas AK, Lichtman AH, Pillai S: Fundamentals of Immunology. Functions and disorders of the immune system. Translation from the English language of the fifth edition of the book Basic immunology. University of Split, Faculty of Medicine. 2016

Antigen recognition and co-stimulation induce the synthesis of IL-2 and the IL-2 receptor alpha chain (IL2R α or CD25)⁸. IL-2 acts as an autocrine and paracrine growth factor that activates blastogenesis or clonal expansion⁸. Proliferation and survival of naïve T lymphocytes includes Fas-Fas Ligand interaction, tumor necrosis factor (TNF), TNF Receptor I and II, CD40-CD40 ligand, as well as perforins and interferon gamma (interferon gamma, IFN- γ)⁸.

At the same time as proliferation, differentiation begins, which results in the creation of effector (CD4⁺ helper and CD8⁺ cytotoxic) and memory T lymphocytes⁸. Effector CD4⁺ T lymphocytes (Th1, Th2, Th9, Th17, Th22) produce cytokines and stimulate B lymphocytes to produce antibodies⁸. Effector CD8⁺ T lymphocytes directly attack cells (destroy malignant cells or virus-infected cells)⁸. Memory T lymphocytes develop a rapid response upon re-encounter with the antigen³¹.

The departure of naïve T lymphocytes from LN is controlled by the phospholipid molecule sphingosine-1-phosphate (S1P)⁹. The interior of the LN has a lower concentration of S1P, compared to the blood and lymph⁹. When a naïve T lymphocyte enters the LN, a low concentration of S1P induces an increased expression of the S1P receptor⁹. If the naïve T lymphocyte does not recognize the antigen, it leaves the LN through the efferent lymphatic vessels into the lymph, threatening the S1P gradient⁹.

Activated naïve T lymphocyte transiently expresses CD69 which suppresses the expression of S1P receptor⁹. The same enables retention of naïve T lymphocytes in

LN for several days (until the end of differentiation into effector cells)⁹. Once fully differentiated, effector T lymphocytes reduce the expression of CD69, CCR7 and L-selectin and go along the S1P gradient through the efferent lymphatic vessels into the circulation⁹. Effector T cells simultaneously express chemokine receptors that guide them to the site of infection⁹.

Recirculation of naive T lymphocytes in nonlymphoid organs

The issue of homing of naïve T lymphocytes to and from non-lymphoid organs in physiological conditions has not been fully resolved^{8,32}. There is an opinion that under physiological conditions naïve T lymphocytes routinely access almost all non-lymphoid organs^{8,29}. According to the same, it is secondary migration, bearing in mind that the number of naïve T lymphocytes in non-lymphoid organs is relatively small (far smaller than the contingent of resident or effector memory T lymphocytes)^{29,32}. However, given the blood flow through most non-lymphoid organs and the speed of movement of naïve T lymphocytes, it is thought that each naïve T lymphocyte is likely to access all non-lymphoid organs many times during its lifetime⁸. Naive T lymphocytes were identified in cord blood and liver³². In addition, they have been isolated in the liver, lungs, brain, skin, testes, kidneys, pancreas and bone marrow of genetically modified mice³².

It is considered that a significant part of naïve T lymphocytes enters non-lymphoid organs as part of the normal migratory path^{32,33}. Although some naïve T lymphocytes express tissue-specific homing receptors (CD45RA+ T lymphocytes express gut integrins $\alpha 4/\beta 7$), the majority of naïve T lymphocytes that migrate to non-lymphoid tissues do so randomly^{8,32}. In physiological conditions, the migration of naïve T lymphocytes through non-lymphoid organs takes place according to a system that is not dependent on signaling mediated by chemokine receptors^{8,32,33}. It is assumed that the rolling and adhesion of naïve T lymphocytes in the absence of CD11a is mediated by CD44 and integrin $\alpha 4\beta 1$ (very late antigen-4, VLA-4)⁸.

Naive T lymphocytes are not constituents of non-lymphoid organs⁸. They move through them over several days, suggesting that naïve T lymphocytes access non-lymphoid organs for the purpose of immunosurveillance and/or tolerance induction⁸. In addition, it is believed that the activation of naïve T lymphocytes can start outside the secondary lymphoid organs⁸. There is an opinion that the largest part of naïve T lymphocytes in non-lymphoid organs migrates in order to induce tolerance⁸. This is supported by the mediation of peripheral tolerance to CD4+ T lymphocytes by the expression of ligand 1 programmed death of pancreatic parenchymal cells⁸. Antigen-specific retention and activation of naïve CD4+ T lymphocytes in the liver is enabled by a population of resident phagocytic cells, i.e. Kupffer cells (KC)³³. KCs

have the ability to capture, degrade and present (as part of class II MCH molecules) antigen expressed in hepatocytes³³.

Non-lymphoid organs burdened with chronic inflammation and tumor process may possess a significant number of naïve T lymphocytes^{34,35}. Chronic inflammation is characterized by HEVs expressing PNAd + and/or MAdCAM-1, often in the context of tertiary lymphoid organs (TLOs)^{35,36}. In addition, PNAd + blood vessels have been identified in human tumors (peritoneum, lung, subcutaneous tissue)³⁶. The expression of PNAd on HEV in LN/TLO is predominantly controlled by the signals of the receptor for lymphotoxin-beta (LT β R)³⁵. In tumor tissue, the expression is induced by the secretion of IFN γ ³⁶.

PNAd enables the influx of naïve T lymphocytes in a relatively late phase, i.e. after the formation of HEV³⁵. In the initial stage of the chronic inflammation/tumor process, naïve T cells access the periphery via blood vessels that do not have HEV-specific vascular addresses^{35,36}. Venules in affected nonlymphoid organs express L selectin ligands, distinct from PNAd and MAdCAM³⁵. In addition, CXC Chemokine Ligand 12/stromal cell-derived factor 1 α constitutively present in endothelial cells of non-lymphoid organs increases its expression after inflammation³⁴. The expression of CCL21 in blood vessels enables the influx of naïve T lymphocytes and possibly other CCR7+ lymphocytes³⁵. Activation of naïve CD4+ T lymphocytes results in the expression of lymphotoxin α 1 β 2, which induces the formation of organized lymphoid tissue³⁴.

De novo formation of organized lymphoid tissue is present in rheumatoid arthritis, multiple sclerosis, Hashimoto's thyroiditis, diabetes mellitus, chronic inflammatory bowel diseases, as well as some infectious diseases³⁴. Organized lymphoid tissue causally contributes to the persistence of autoimmune diseases³⁴. On the other hand, the density of HEV or the presence of TLO in human tumors corresponds with a positive prognosis³⁵. Therefore, the induction of HEV development in tumors can be a valuable therapeutic intervention³⁵.

Briefly

Under physiological conditions, naïve T cells circulate through secondary lymphoid organs, increasing the possibility of antigen encounter⁹. Circulation of naïve T lymphocytes represents an ordered sequence controlled by the expression of specific proteins (selectin, integrin and chemokine) which includes the recruitment of circulating lymphocytes on the luminal surface of the blood vessel, transendothelial transition and migration within the extravascular compartment of peripheral lymphoid organs¹⁰.

Antigen recognition in secondary lymphoid organs induces activation and differentiation of naïve T lymphocytes into effector and memory T lymphocytes³. The activation and differentiation of naïve T lymphocytes requires the interaction of the T

cell receptor with the peptide antigen, signaling through costimulatory molecules and the presence of cytokines³. Once fully differentiated, effector T lymphocytes migrate to the site of infection where they perform their effector role⁹. Long-lived memory T lymphocytes develop a rapid response upon re-encounter with the antigen⁹. It is believed that naïve T lymphocytes in physiological conditions approach non-lymphoid organs for the purpose of immune surveillance and/or induction of tolerance⁸.

In autoimmune diseases, autoantigens can be presented by naïve T lymphocytes at the site of inflammation, which causally contributes to the persistence of the disease³⁴. On the other hand, the presence of naïve T lymphocytes in human tumors corresponds to a positive prognosis³⁵.

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