

Chapter 3

THE CELLS OF THE IMMUNE SYSTEM AND THE PROFILE OF THE ENDOMETRIAL IMMUNE CELLS DURING IMPLANTATION AND PREGNANCY

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INTRODUCTION

The immune system is responsible for fighting infections and diseases. It is comprised of many specialised cell types which work together to keep our bodies healthy. In this chapter you will be introducing the major cells of the immune system and their special profile in the endometrium during pregnancy.

The cells of the immune system are found in various forms in the body. They may be dispersed in blood, lymph, epithelium and connective tissue, or they may be located in connective tissue and some organs as nodules. They may also be organized into larger lymphoid organs such as thymus, spleen, lymph nodes and bone marrow ⁽¹⁾.

THE CELLS OF THE IMMUNE SYSTEM

The molecules that are recognized by the cells of the immune system and form a response are called antigens. Immune system cells recognize and react to small molecular regions called epitopes or antigenic determinants, not the whole antigen. The antibody is a glycoprotein that interacts with the epitope. The an-

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