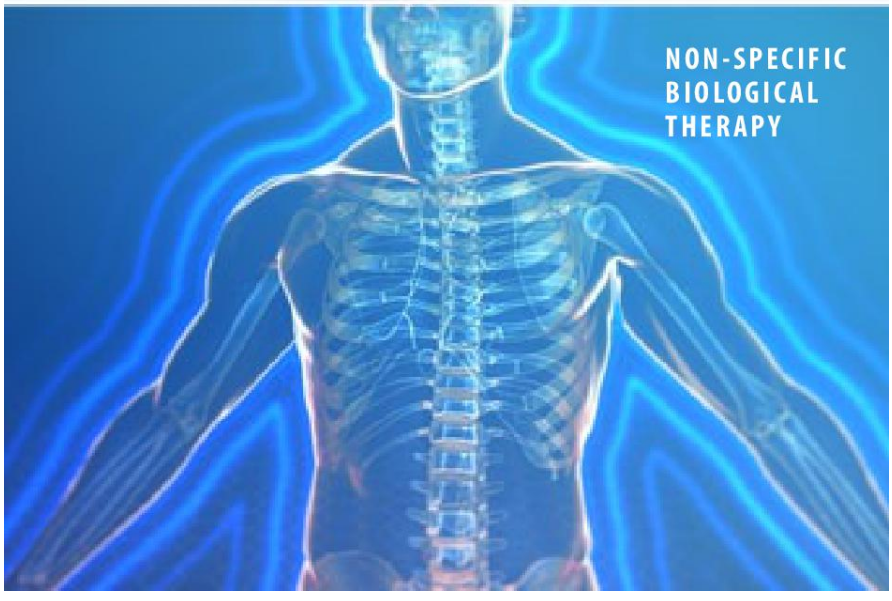
Biological Therapy/Immunotherapy (Overview)



Overview

Your immune system helps detect and destroy invading germs. But because cancer cells are made from your own tissue, your immune system may not always see these cells as something that should be attacked. The goal of biological therapy, also called "immunotherapy," is to help your immune system recognize and fight cancer cells. There are several types of biological therapies. Let's look at the three main types.

Monoclonal Antibody Therapy

Monoclonal antibody therapy uses antibodies that have been engineered in a lab. Antibodies are substances that your body naturally produces to help fight germs. But the lab-grown monoclonal antibodies you are given are programmed to seek out and attach to cancer cells. This helps your immune system recognize the cancer cells so it can mount an attack.

Cancer Vaccines

Cancer vaccines are the second main type of biological therapy. These vaccines are made from cancer cells or other substances. When a cancer vaccine is injected into your body, it prompts your immune system to react and fight. The goal is to try to get your immune system to respond to your cancer cells the way it responds to the vaccine.

Non-specific Biological Therapy

The third main type is called non-specific biological therapy. These substances do not specifically target cancer cells. They boost the entire immune system. A stronger, more efficient immune system can fight cancer cells more effectively.

Conclusion

Biological therapy can be combined with other options such as chemotherapy or radiation therapy. Your cancer treatment plan depends on your specific cancer, your goals and your particular needs. Your doctor can let you know if biological therapy should play a role in your treatment.