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Protein–Protein Interactions: Mechanisms and Functional Implications

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Abstract

Protein–protein interactions (PPIs) are fundamental molecular events that govern virtually all cellular processes, including signal transduction, metabolic regulation, immune responses, and structural organization. These interactions involve specific binding between protein molecules, forming transient or stable complexes that determine cellular function and homeostasis. The study of PPIs has expanded significantly with advances in proteomics, structural biology, and computational modeling, providing insight into complex biological networks. Dysregulation of PPIs can lead to diseases such as cancer, neurodegenerative disorders, and infectious diseases. This article provides a comprehensive overview of protein–protein interactions, emphasizing their mechanisms, detection methods, regulatory roles, and biological significance.

Keywords: *Protein–protein interactions, molecular complexes, signaling pathways, structural biology, cellular regulation*

Introduction

Protein–protein interactions are central to the functioning of cells and organisms, as proteins rarely act in isolation. Instead, they form intricate networks that coordinate biological processes and maintain cellular homeostasis. These interactions can be transient, allowing rapid responses to stimuli, or stable, forming permanent structural or functional assemblies such as ribosomes, proteasomes, and cytoskeletal complexes. The specificity and affinity of PPIs are determined by complementary surfaces, structural domains, and dynamic conformational changes, making these interactions highly regulated and finely tuned.PPIs play critical roles in diverse cellular pathways. In signal transduction, protein interactions propagate signals from membrane receptors to downstream effectors, influencing gene expression, metabolism, and cell fate decisions. In metabolic pathways, enzyme complexes often interact to enhance substrate channeling and catalytic efficiency. Immune system function relies on protein interactions for antigen recognition, signal transduction, and effector responses. Furthermore, the formation of protein complexes is essential for maintaining cellular architecture, such as the assembly of cytoskeletal filaments and intercellular junctions ,he study of protein–protein interactions has advanced significantly with the development of experimental techniques such as yeast two-hybrid assays, co-immunoprecipitation, fluorescence resonance energy transfer (FRET), and X-ray crystallography. Computational approaches, including molecular docking and network analysis, have further enhanced the understanding of interaction

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dynamics and predicted novel interactions. Dysregulation of PPIs, whether through mutation, misfolding, or aberrant expression, can disrupt cellular processes and contribute to diseases including cancer, neurodegenerative disorders, and infectious diseases. Consequently, targeting PPIs has emerged as a promising therapeutic strategy, offering opportunities to modulate cellular pathways selectively.

Conclusion

Protein–protein interactions are essential for the regulation of cellular functions, signaling pathways, and structural integrity. The specificity and dynamics of these interactions allow cells to respond to internal and external cues effectively. Advances in experimental and computational techniques have significantly improved our understanding of PPIs and their role in health and disease. Investigating these interactions not only provides insight into fundamental biological processes but also opens avenues for therapeutic interventions, making PPIs a central focus of modern molecular biology and drug discovery.

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