

Immune checkpoints are a normal part of the immune system. Their role is to prevent an immune response from being so strong that it destroys healthy cells in the body.

Immune checkpoints engage when proteins on the surface of immune cells called T cells recognize and bind to partner proteins on other cells, such as some tumor cells. These proteins are called immune checkpoint proteins. When the checkpoint and partner proteins bind together, they send an “off” signal to the T cells. This can prevent the immune system from destroying the cancer.

Immunotherapy drugs called immune checkpoint inhibitors work by blocking checkpoint proteins from binding with their partner proteins. This prevents the “off” signal from being sent, allowing the T cells to kill cancer cells.

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