

Fungus That Can Cripple the Immune System

Author

Enago Academy

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We have seen the greenish-grey colored growth on bread. Did you know that same fungus could even affect your immune system adversely? According to the study published in the *Cell Chemical Biology*, a strain of *Aspergillus*, *Aspergillus fumigatus*, can release a mycotoxin named gliotoxin that has an immunosuppressive effect on the immune system. The researchers at Friedrich Schiller University have observed that gliotoxin inhibits the production of a certain messenger leukotriene from neutrophilic granulocytes, thereby preventing the signal from reaching other immune cells. The mycotoxin produces a hydrolase enzyme that inhibits the production of the messenger leukotriene and thereby destroys the defence mechanism. This, in turn, helps the fungus enter the tissues and cause the disease. The scientists consider this as a major discovery since it highlights how harmful a fungal attack could be on the body's internal systems.

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