

# 8

## An Introduction to Metabolism



▲ **Figure 8.1** What causes these two squid to glow?

### KEY CONCEPTS

- 8.1 An organism's metabolism transforms matter and energy, subject to the laws of thermodynamics
- 8.2 The free-energy change of a reaction tells us whether or not the reaction occurs spontaneously
- 8.3 ATP powers cellular work by coupling exergonic reactions to endergonic reactions
- 8.4 Enzymes speed up metabolic reactions by lowering energy barriers
- 8.5 Regulation of enzyme activity helps control metabolism

### OVERVIEW

## The Energy of Life

The living cell is a chemical factory in miniature, where thousands of reactions occur within a microscopic space. Sugars can be converted to amino acids that are linked together into proteins when needed, and when food is digested, pro-

teins are dismantled into amino acids that can be converted to sugars. Small molecules are assembled into polymers, which may be hydrolyzed later as the needs of the cell change. In multicellular organisms, many cells export chemical products that are used in other parts of the organism. The process called cellular respiration drives the cellular economy by extracting the energy stored in sugars and other fuels. Cells apply this energy to perform various types of work, such as the transport of solutes across the plasma membrane, which we discussed in Chapter 7. In a more exotic example, cells of the two firefly squid (*Watasenia scintillans*) shown mating in **Figure 8.1** convert the energy stored in certain organic molecules to light, a process called bioluminescence. (The light pattern aids in mate recognition and protection from predators lurking below.) Bioluminescence and other metabolic activities carried out by a cell are precisely coordinated and controlled. In its complexity, its efficiency, and its responsiveness to subtle changes, the cell is peerless as a chemical factory. The concepts of metabolism that you learn in this chapter will help you understand how matter and energy flow during life's processes and how that flow is regulated.

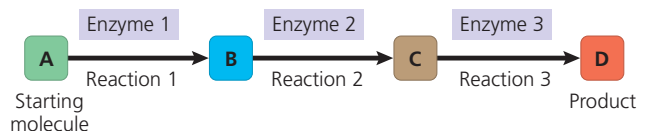
### CONCEPT 8.1

## An organism's metabolism transforms matter and energy, subject to the laws of thermodynamics

The totality of an organism's chemical reactions is called **metabolism** (from the Greek *metabole*, change). Metabolism is an emergent property of life that arises from orderly interactions between molecules.

### Organization of the Chemistry of Life into Metabolic Pathways

We can picture a cell's metabolism as an elaborate road map of the thousands of chemical reactions that occur in a cell, arranged as intersecting metabolic pathways. A **metabolic pathway** begins with a specific molecule, which is then altered in a series of defined steps, resulting in a certain product. Each step of the pathway is catalyzed by a specific enzyme:



Analogous to the red, yellow, and green stoplights that control the flow of automobile traffic, mechanisms that regulate enzymes balance metabolic supply and demand.

Metabolism as a whole manages the material and energy resources of the cell. Some metabolic pathways release energy by breaking down complex molecules to simpler compounds. These degradative processes are called **catabolic pathways**, or breakdown pathways. A major pathway of catabolism is cellular respiration, in which the sugar glucose and other organic fuels are broken down in the presence of oxygen to carbon dioxide and water. (Pathways can have more than one starting molecule and/or product.) Energy that was stored in the organic molecules becomes available to do the work of the cell, such as ciliary beating or membrane transport. **Anabolic pathways**, in contrast, consume energy to build complicated molecules from simpler ones; they are sometimes called biosynthetic pathways. Examples of anabolism are the synthesis of an amino acid from simpler molecules and the synthesis of a protein from amino acids. Catabolic and anabolic pathways are the “downhill” and “uphill” avenues of the metabolic landscape. Energy released from the downhill reactions of catabolic pathways can be stored and then used to drive the uphill reactions of anabolic pathways.

In this chapter, we will focus on mechanisms common to metabolic pathways. Because energy is fundamental to all metabolic processes, a basic knowledge of energy is necessary to understand how the living cell works. Although we will use some nonliving examples to study energy, the concepts demonstrated by these examples also apply to **bioenergetics**, the study of how energy flows through living organisms.

## Forms of Energy

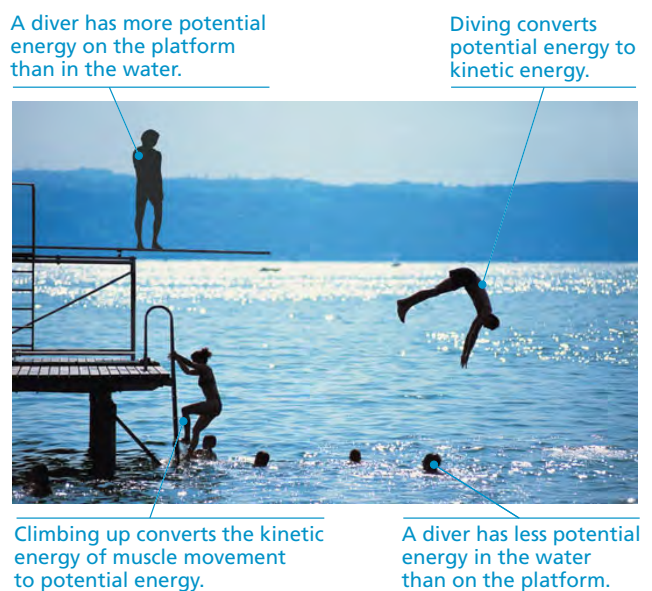
**Energy** is the capacity to cause change. In everyday life, energy is important because some forms of energy can be used to do work—that is, to move matter against opposing forces, such as gravity and friction. Put another way, energy is the ability to rearrange a collection of matter. For example, you expend energy to turn the pages of this book, and your cells expend energy in transporting certain substances across membranes. Energy exists in various forms, and the work of life depends on the ability of cells to transform energy from one form to another.

Energy can be associated with the relative motion of objects; this energy is called **kinetic energy**. Moving objects can perform work by imparting motion to other matter: A pool player uses the motion of the cue stick to push the cue ball, which in turn moves the other balls; water gushing through a dam turns turbines; and the contraction of leg muscles pushes bicycle pedals. **Heat**, or **thermal energy**, is kinetic energy associated with the random movement of atoms or molecules. Light is also a type of energy that can be harnessed to perform work, such as powering photosynthesis in green plants.

An object not presently moving may still possess energy. Energy that is not kinetic is called **potential energy**; it is energy that matter possesses because of its location or struc-

ture. Water behind a dam, for instance, possesses energy because of its altitude above sea level. Molecules possess energy because of the arrangement of electrons in the bonds between their atoms. **Chemical energy** is a term used by biologists to refer to the potential energy available for release in a chemical reaction. Recall that catabolic pathways release energy by breaking down complex molecules. Biologists say that these complex molecules, such as glucose, are high in chemical energy. During a catabolic reaction, some bonds are broken and others formed, releasing energy and resulting in lower-energy breakdown products. This transformation also occurs, for example, in the engine of a car when the hydrocarbons of gasoline react explosively with oxygen, releasing the energy that pushes the pistons and producing exhaust. Although less explosive, a similar reaction of food molecules with oxygen provides chemical energy in biological systems, producing carbon dioxide and water as waste products. Biochemical pathways, carried out in the context of cellular structures, enable cells to release chemical energy from food molecules and use the energy to power life processes.

How is energy converted from one form to another? Consider the divers in **Figure 8.2**. The young woman climbing the ladder to the diving platform is releasing chemical energy from the food she ate for lunch and using some of that energy to perform the work of climbing. The kinetic energy of muscle movement is thus being transformed into potential energy due to her increasing height above the water. The young man diving is converting his potential energy to kinetic energy, which is then transferred to the water as he enters it. A small amount of energy is lost as heat due to friction.



▲ **Figure 8.2** Transformations between potential and kinetic energy.

Now let's go back one step and consider the original source of the organic food molecules that provided the necessary chemical energy for the diver to climb the steps. This chemical energy was itself derived from light energy by plants during photosynthesis. Organisms are energy transformers.

## The Laws of Energy Transformation

The study of the energy transformations that occur in a collection of matter is called **thermodynamics**. Scientists use the word *system* to denote the matter under study; they refer to the rest of the universe—everything outside the system—as the *surroundings*. An *isolated system*, such as that approximated by liquid in a thermos bottle, is unable to exchange either energy or matter with its surroundings. In an *open system*, energy and matter can be transferred between the system and its surroundings. Organisms are open systems. They absorb energy—for instance, light energy or chemical energy in the form of organic molecules—and release heat and metabolic waste products, such as carbon dioxide, to the surroundings. Two laws of thermodynamics govern energy transformations in organisms and all other collections of matter.

### The First Law of Thermodynamics

According to the **first law of thermodynamics**, the energy of the universe is constant: *Energy can be transferred and transformed, but it cannot be created or destroyed*. The first law is also known as the *principle of conservation of energy*. The electric company does not make energy, but merely converts it to a form that is convenient for us to use. By converting sunlight to chemical energy, a plant acts as an energy transformer, not an energy producer.

The brown bear in **Figure 8.3a** will convert the chemical energy of the organic molecules in its food to kinetic and other forms of energy as it carries out biological processes. What happens to this energy after it has performed work? The second law of thermodynamics helps to answer this question.

### The Second Law of Thermodynamics

If energy cannot be destroyed, why can't organisms simply recycle their energy over and over again? It turns out that during every energy transfer or transformation, some energy becomes unavailable to do work. In most energy transformations, more usable forms of energy are at least partly converted to heat, which is the energy associated with the random motion of atoms or molecules. Only a small fraction of the chemical energy from the food in Figure 8.3a is transformed into the motion of the brown bear shown in **Figure 8.3b**; most is lost as heat, which dissipates rapidly through the surroundings.

In the process of carrying out chemical reactions that perform various kinds of work, living cells unavoidably convert other forms of energy to heat. A system can put heat to work only when there is a temperature difference that results in the heat flowing from a warmer location to a cooler one. If temperature is uniform, as it is in a living cell, then the only use for heat energy generated during a chemical reaction is to warm a body of matter, such as the organism. (This can make a room crowded with people uncomfortably warm, as each person is carrying out a multitude of chemical reactions!)

A logical consequence of the loss of usable energy during energy transfer or transformation is that each such event makes the universe more disordered. Scientists use a quantity called **entropy** as a measure of disorder, or randomness.



**(a) First law of thermodynamics:** Energy can be transferred or transformed but neither created nor destroyed. For example, chemical reactions in this brown bear (*Ursus arctos*) will convert the chemical (potential) energy in the fish into the kinetic energy of running, shown in (b).



**(b) Second law of thermodynamics:** Every energy transfer or transformation increases the disorder (entropy) of the universe. For example, as it runs, disorder is increased around the bear by the release of heat and small molecules that are the by-products of metabolism. A brown bear can run at speeds up to 35 miles per hour (56 km/hr)—as fast as a racehorse.

**▲ Figure 8.3** The two laws of thermodynamics.

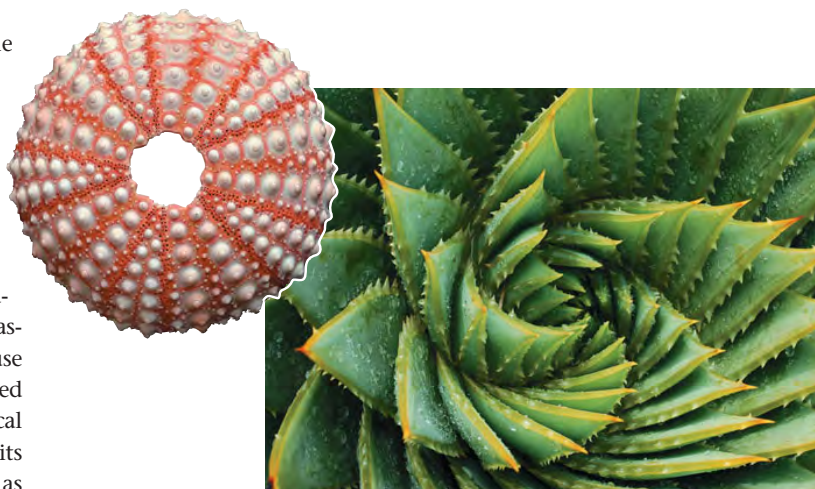
The more randomly arranged a collection of matter is, the greater its entropy. We can now state the **second law of thermodynamics**: *Every energy transfer or transformation increases the entropy of the universe.* Although order can increase locally, there is an unstoppable trend toward randomization of the universe as a whole.

In many cases, increased entropy is evident in the physical disintegration of a system's organized structure. For example, you can observe increasing entropy in the gradual decay of an unmaintained building. Much of the increasing entropy of the universe is less apparent, however, because it appears as increasing amounts of heat and less ordered forms of matter. As the bear in Figure 8.3b converts chemical energy to kinetic energy, it is also increasing the disorder of its surroundings by producing heat and small molecules, such as the CO<sub>2</sub> it exhales, that are the breakdown products of food.

The concept of entropy helps us understand why certain processes occur without any input of energy. It turns out that for a process to occur on its own, without outside help, it must increase the entropy of the universe. A process that can occur without an input of energy is called a **spontaneous process**. Note that as we're using it here, the word *spontaneous* does not imply that such a process would occur quickly; rather, the word signifies that the process is energetically favorable. (In fact, it may be helpful for you to think of the phrase "energetically favorable" when you read the formal term "spontaneous.") Some spontaneous processes, such as an explosion, may be virtually instantaneous, while others, such as the rusting of an old car over time, are much slower. A process that cannot occur on its own is said to be nonspontaneous; it will happen only if energy is added to the system. We know from experience that certain events occur spontaneously and others do not. For instance, we know that water flows downhill spontaneously but moves uphill only with an input of energy, such as when a machine pumps the water against gravity. This understanding gives us another way to state the second law: *For a process to occur spontaneously, it must increase the entropy of the universe.*

### Biological Order and Disorder

Living systems increase the entropy of their surroundings, as predicted by thermodynamic law. It is true that cells create ordered structures from less organized starting materials. For example, simpler molecules are ordered into the more complex structure of an amino acid, and amino acids are ordered into polypeptide chains. At the organismal level as well, complex and beautifully ordered structures result from biological processes that use simpler starting materials (**Figure 8.4**). However, an organism also takes in organized forms of matter and energy from the surroundings and replaces them with less ordered forms. For example, an animal obtains starch, proteins, and other complex molecules from the food it eats. As catabolic pathways break these molecules down,



▲ **Figure 8.4 Order as a characteristic of life.** Order is evident in the detailed structures of the sea urchin skeleton and the succulent plant shown here. As open systems, organisms can increase their order as long as the order of their surroundings decreases.

the animal releases carbon dioxide and water—small molecules that possess less chemical energy than the food did. The depletion of chemical energy is accounted for by heat generated during metabolism. On a larger scale, energy flows into most ecosystems in the form of light and exits in the form of heat (see Figure 1.6).

During the early history of life, complex organisms evolved from simpler ancestors. For example, we can trace the ancestry of the plant kingdom from much simpler organisms called green algae to more complex flowering plants. However, this increase in organization over time in no way violates the second law. The entropy of a particular system, such as an organism, may actually decrease as long as the total entropy of the *universe*—the system plus its surroundings—increases. Thus, organisms are islands of low entropy in an increasingly random universe. The evolution of biological order is perfectly consistent with the laws of thermodynamics.

### CONCEPT CHECK 8.1

1. **MAKE CONNECTIONS** How does the second law of thermodynamics help explain the diffusion of a substance across a membrane? See Figure 7.13 on page 132.
2. Describe the forms of energy found in an apple as it grows on a tree, then falls, then is digested by someone who eats it.
3. **WHAT IF?** If you place a teaspoon of sugar in the bottom of a glass of water, it will dissolve completely over time. Left longer, eventually the water will disappear and the sugar crystals will reappear. Explain these observations in terms of entropy.

For suggested answers, see Appendix A.

## CONCEPT 8.2

### The free-energy change of a reaction tells us whether or not the reaction occurs spontaneously

The laws of thermodynamics that we've just discussed apply to the universe as a whole. As biologists, we want to understand the chemical reactions of life—for example, which reactions occur spontaneously and which ones require some input of energy from outside. But how can we know this without assessing the energy and entropy changes in the entire universe for each separate reaction?

#### Free-Energy Change, $\Delta G$

Recall that the universe is really equivalent to “the system” plus “the surroundings.” In 1878, J. Willard Gibbs, a professor at Yale, defined a very useful function called the Gibbs free energy of a system (without considering its surroundings), symbolized by the letter  $G$ . We'll refer to the Gibbs free energy simply as free energy. **Free energy** is the portion of a system's energy that can perform work when temperature and pressure are uniform throughout the system, as in a living cell. Let's consider how we determine the free-energy change that occurs when a system changes—for example, during a chemical reaction.

The change in free energy,  $\Delta G$ , can be calculated for a chemical reaction by applying the following equation:

$$\Delta G = \Delta H - T\Delta S$$

This equation uses only properties of the system (the reaction) itself:  $\Delta H$  symbolizes the change in the system's *enthalpy* (in biological systems, equivalent to total energy);  $\Delta S$  is the change in the system's entropy; and  $T$  is the absolute temperature in Kelvin (K) units ( $K = ^\circ C + 273$ ; see Appendix C).

Once we know the value of  $\Delta G$  for a process, we can use it to predict whether the process will be spontaneous (that is, whether it is energetically favorable and will occur without an input of energy). More than a century of experiments has shown that only processes with a negative  $\Delta G$  are spontaneous. For  $\Delta G$  to be negative, either  $\Delta H$  must be negative (the system gives up enthalpy and  $H$  decreases) or  $T\Delta S$  must be positive (the system gives up order and  $S$  increases), or both: When  $\Delta H$  and  $T\Delta S$  are tallied,  $\Delta G$  has a negative value ( $\Delta G < 0$ ) for all spontaneous processes. In other words, every spontaneous process decreases the system's free energy, and processes that have a positive or zero  $\Delta G$  are never spontaneous.

This information is immensely interesting to biologists, for it gives us the power to predict which kinds of change can happen without help. Such spontaneous changes can be harnessed to perform work. This principle is very important in

the study of metabolism, where a major goal is to determine which reactions can supply energy for cellular work.

#### Free Energy, Stability, and Equilibrium

As we saw in the previous section, when a process occurs spontaneously in a system, we can be sure that  $\Delta G$  is negative. Another way to think of  $\Delta G$  is to realize that it represents the difference between the free energy of the final state and the free energy of the initial state:

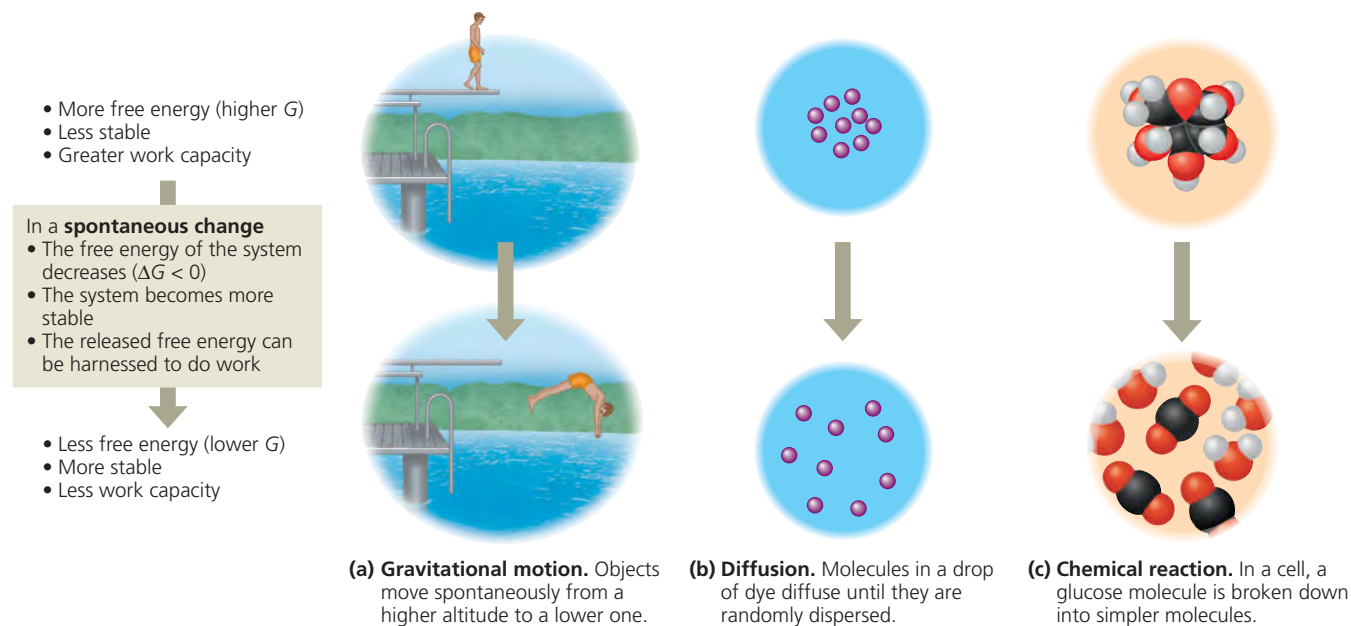
$$\Delta G = G_{\text{final state}} - G_{\text{initial state}}$$

Thus,  $\Delta G$  can be negative only when the process involves a loss of free energy during the change from initial state to final state. Because it has less free energy, the system in its final state is less likely to change and is therefore more stable than it was previously.

We can think of free energy as a measure of a system's instability—its tendency to change to a more stable state. Unstable systems (higher  $G$ ) tend to change in such a way that they become more stable (lower  $G$ ). For example, a diver on top of a platform is less stable (more likely to fall) than when floating in the water; a drop of concentrated dye is less stable (more likely to disperse) than when the dye is spread randomly through the liquid; and a glucose molecule is less stable (more likely to break down) than the simpler molecules into which it can be split (**Figure 8.5**). Unless something prevents it, each of these systems will move toward greater stability: The diver falls, the solution becomes uniformly colored, and the glucose molecule is broken down.

Another term that describes a state of maximum stability is *equilibrium*, which you learned about in Chapter 2 in connection with chemical reactions. There is an important relationship between free energy and equilibrium, including chemical equilibrium. Recall that most chemical reactions are reversible and proceed to a point at which the forward and backward reactions occur at the same rate. The reaction is then said to be at chemical equilibrium, and there is no further net change in the relative concentration of products and reactants.

As a reaction proceeds toward equilibrium, the free energy of the mixture of reactants and products decreases. Free energy increases when a reaction is somehow pushed away from equilibrium, perhaps by removing some of the products (and thus changing their concentration relative to that of the reactants). For a system at equilibrium,  $G$  is at its lowest possible value in that system. We can think of the equilibrium state as a free-energy valley. Any change from the equilibrium position will have a positive  $\Delta G$  and will not be spontaneous. For this reason, systems never spontaneously move away from equilibrium. Because a system at equilibrium cannot spontaneously change, it can do no work. *A process is spontaneous and can perform work only when it is moving toward equilibrium.*



**▲ Figure 8.5 The relationship of free energy to stability, work capacity, and spontaneous change.** Unstable systems (top) are rich in free energy,  $G$ . They have a tendency to change spontaneously to a more stable state (bottom), and it is possible to harness this “downhill” change to perform work.

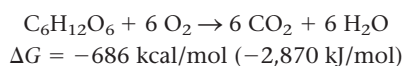
## Free Energy and Metabolism

We can now apply the free-energy concept more specifically to the chemistry of life’s processes.

### Exergonic and Endergonic Reactions in Metabolism

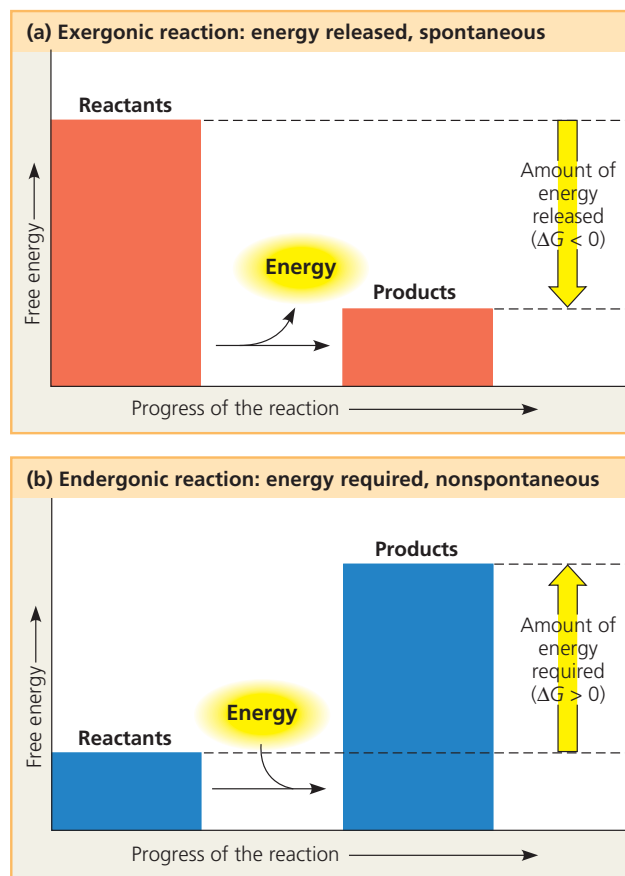
Based on their free-energy changes, chemical reactions can be classified as either exergonic (“energy outward”) or endergonic (“energy inward”). An **exergonic reaction** proceeds with a net release of free energy (Figure 8.6a). Because the chemical mixture loses free energy ( $G$  decreases),  $\Delta G$  is negative for an exergonic reaction. Using  $\Delta G$  as a standard for spontaneity, exergonic reactions are those that occur spontaneously. (Remember, the word *spontaneous* implies that it is energetically favorable, not that it will occur rapidly.) The magnitude of  $\Delta G$  for an exergonic reaction represents the maximum amount of work the reaction can perform.\* The greater the decrease in free energy, the greater the amount of work that can be done.

We can use the overall reaction for cellular respiration as an example:



\*The word *maximum* qualifies this statement, because some of the free energy is released as heat and cannot do work. Therefore,  $\Delta G$  represents a theoretical upper limit of available energy.

**▼ Figure 8.6 Free energy changes ( $\Delta G$ ) in exergonic and endergonic reactions.**



For each mole (180 g) of glucose broken down by respiration under what are called “standard conditions” (1 M of each reactant and product, 25°C, pH 7), 686 kcal (2,870 kJ) of energy are made available for work. Because energy must be conserved, the chemical products of respiration store 686 kcal less free energy per mole than the reactants. The products are, in a sense, the spent exhaust of a process that tapped the free energy stored in the bonds of the sugar molecules.

It is important to realize that the breaking of bonds does not release energy; on the contrary, as you will soon see, it requires energy. The phrase “energy stored in bonds” is shorthand for the potential energy that can be released when new bonds are formed after the original bonds break, as long as the products are of lower free energy than the reactants.

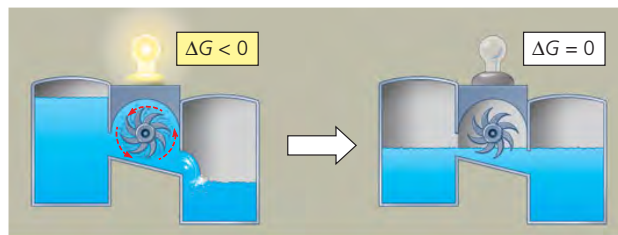
An **endergonic reaction** is one that absorbs free energy from its surroundings (**Figure 8.6b**). Because this kind of reaction essentially *stores* free energy in molecules ( $G$  increases),  $\Delta G$  is positive. Such reactions are nonspontaneous, and the magnitude of  $\Delta G$  is the quantity of energy required to drive the reaction. If a chemical process is exergonic (downhill), releasing energy in one direction, then the reverse process must be endergonic (uphill), using energy. A reversible process cannot be downhill in both directions. If  $\Delta G = -686$  kcal/mol for respiration, which converts glucose and oxygen to carbon dioxide and water, then the reverse process—the conversion of carbon dioxide and water to glucose and oxygen—must be strongly endergonic, with  $\Delta G = +686$  kcal/mol. Such a reaction would never happen by itself.

How, then, do plants make the sugar that organisms use for energy? Plants get the required energy—686 kcal to make a mole of glucose—from the environment by capturing light and converting its energy to chemical energy. Next, in a long series of exergonic steps, they gradually spend that chemical energy to assemble glucose molecules.

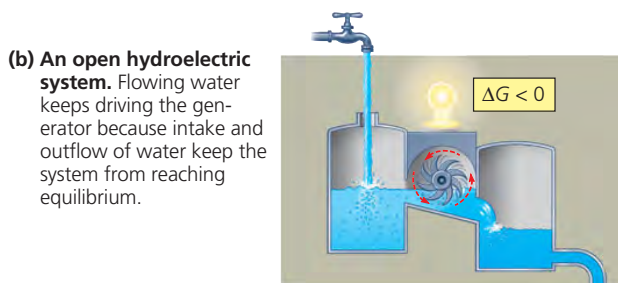
### Equilibrium and Metabolism

Reactions in an isolated system eventually reach equilibrium and can then do no work, as illustrated by the isolated hydroelectric system in **Figure 8.7a**. The chemical reactions of metabolism are reversible, and they, too, would reach equilibrium if they occurred in the isolation of a test tube. Because systems at equilibrium are at a minimum of  $G$  and can do no work, a cell that has reached metabolic equilibrium is dead! The fact that metabolism as a whole is never at equilibrium is one of the defining features of life.

Like most systems, a living cell is not in equilibrium. The constant flow of materials in and out of the cell keeps the metabolic pathways from ever reaching equilibrium, and the cell continues to do work throughout its life. This principle is illustrated by the open (and more realistic) hydroelectric system in **Figure 8.7b**. However, unlike this simple single-step system, a catabolic pathway in a cell releases free energy in a series of



(a) An isolated hydroelectric system. Water flowing downhill turns a turbine that drives a generator providing electricity to a lightbulb, but only until the system reaches equilibrium.



(b) An open hydroelectric system. Flowing water keeps driving the generator because intake and outflow of water keep the system from reaching equilibrium.



(c) A multistep open hydroelectric system. Cellular respiration is analogous to this system: Glucose is broken down in a series of exergonic reactions that power the work of the cell. The product of each reaction becomes the reactant for the next, so no reaction reaches equilibrium.

▲ **Figure 8.7** Equilibrium and work in isolated and open systems.

actions. An example is cellular respiration, illustrated by analogy in **Figure 8.7c**. Some of the reversible reactions of respiration are constantly “pulled” in one direction—that is, they are kept out of equilibrium. The key to maintaining this lack of equilibrium is that the product of a reaction does not accumulate but instead becomes a reactant in the next step; finally, waste products are expelled from the cell. The overall sequence of reactions is kept going by the huge free-energy difference between glucose and oxygen at the top of the energy “hill” and carbon dioxide and water at the “downhill” end. As long as our cells have a steady supply of glucose or other fuels and oxygen and are able to expel waste products to the surroundings, their metabolic pathways never reach equilibrium and can continue to do the work of life.

We see once again how important it is to think of organisms as open systems. Sunlight provides a daily source of free energy for an ecosystem's plants and other photosynthetic organisms. Animals and other nonphotosynthetic organisms in an ecosystem must have a source of free energy in the form of the organic products of photosynthesis. Now that we have applied the free-energy concept to metabolism, we are ready to see how a cell actually performs the work of life.

## CONCEPT CHECK 8.2

- Cellular respiration uses glucose and oxygen, which have high levels of free energy, and releases  $\text{CO}_2$  and water, which have low levels of free energy. Is cellular respiration spontaneous or not? Is it exergonic or endergonic? What happens to the energy released from glucose?
- MAKE CONNECTIONS** As you saw in Figure 7.20 on page 137, a key process in metabolism is the transport of hydrogen ions ( $\text{H}^+$ ) across a membrane to create a concentration gradient. Other processes can result in an equal concentration of  $\text{H}^+$  on each side. Which situation allows the  $\text{H}^+$  to perform work in this system? How is the answer consistent with what is shown in regard to energy in Figure 7.20?
- WHAT IF?** Some night-time partygoers wear glow-in-the-dark necklaces. The necklaces start glowing once they are "activated," which usually involves snapping the necklace in a way that allows two chemicals to react and emit light in the form of chemiluminescence. Is the chemical reaction exergonic or endergonic? Explain your answer.

For suggested answers, see Appendix A.

## CONCEPT 8.3

### ATP powers cellular work by coupling exergonic reactions to endergonic reactions

A cell does three main kinds of work:

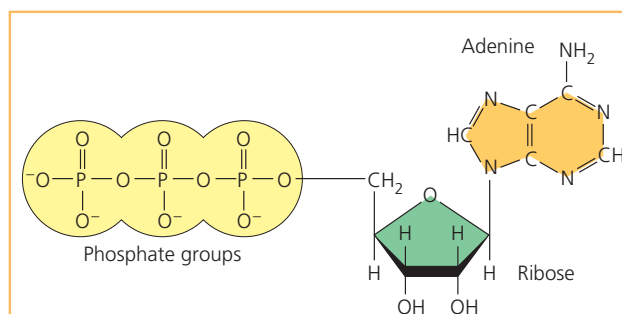
- Chemical work**, the pushing of endergonic reactions that would not occur spontaneously, such as the synthesis of polymers from monomers (chemical work will be discussed further here and in Chapters 9 and 10)
- Transport work**, the pumping of substances across membranes against the direction of spontaneous movement (see Chapter 7)
- Mechanical work**, such as the beating of cilia (see Chapter 6), the contraction of muscle cells, and the movement of chromosomes during cellular reproduction

A key feature in the way cells manage their energy resources to do this work is **energy coupling**, the use of an exergonic process to drive an endergonic one. ATP is responsible for mediating most energy coupling in cells, and in most cases it acts as the immediate source of energy that powers cellular work.

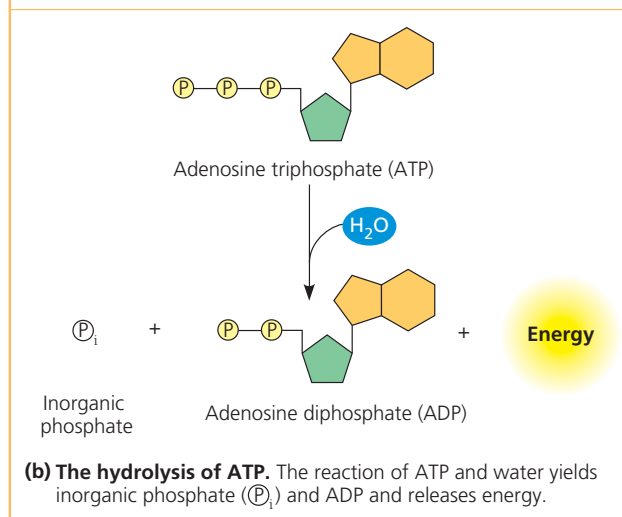
### The Structure and Hydrolysis of ATP

**ATP (adenosine triphosphate)** was introduced in Chapter 4 when we discussed the phosphate group as a functional group. ATP contains the sugar ribose, with the nitrogenous base adenine and a chain of three phosphate groups bonded to it (**Figure 8.8a**). In addition to its role in energy coupling, ATP is also one of the nucleoside triphosphates used to make RNA (see Figure 5.26).

The bonds between the phosphate groups of ATP can be broken by hydrolysis. When the terminal phosphate bond is broken by addition of a water molecule, a molecule of inorganic phosphate ( $\text{HOPO}_3^{2-}$ , abbreviated  $\text{P}_i$  throughout this book) leaves the ATP, which becomes adenosine diphosphate,



(a) **The structure of ATP.** In the cell, most hydroxyl groups of phosphates are ionized ( $-\text{O}^-$ ).

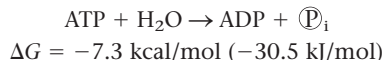


(b) **The hydrolysis of ATP.** The reaction of ATP and water yields inorganic phosphate ( $\text{P}_i$ ) and ADP and releases energy.

▲ **Figure 8.8** The structure and hydrolysis of adenosine triphosphate (ATP).



or ADP (**Figure 8.8b**). The reaction is exergonic and releases 7.3 kcal of energy per mole of ATP hydrolyzed:



This is the free-energy change measured under standard conditions. In the cell, conditions do not conform to standard conditions, primarily because reactant and product concentrations differ from 1 M. For example, when ATP hydrolysis occurs under cellular conditions, the actual  $\Delta G$  is about  $-13 \text{ kcal/mol}$ , 78% greater than the energy released by ATP hydrolysis under standard conditions.

Because their hydrolysis releases energy, the phosphate bonds of ATP are sometimes referred to as high-energy phosphate bonds, but the term is misleading. The phosphate bonds of ATP are not unusually strong bonds, as “high-energy” may imply; rather, the reactants (ATP and water) themselves have high energy relative to the energy of the products (ADP and  $\text{P}_i$ ). The release of energy during the hydrolysis of ATP comes from the chemical change to a state of lower free energy, not from the phosphate bonds themselves.

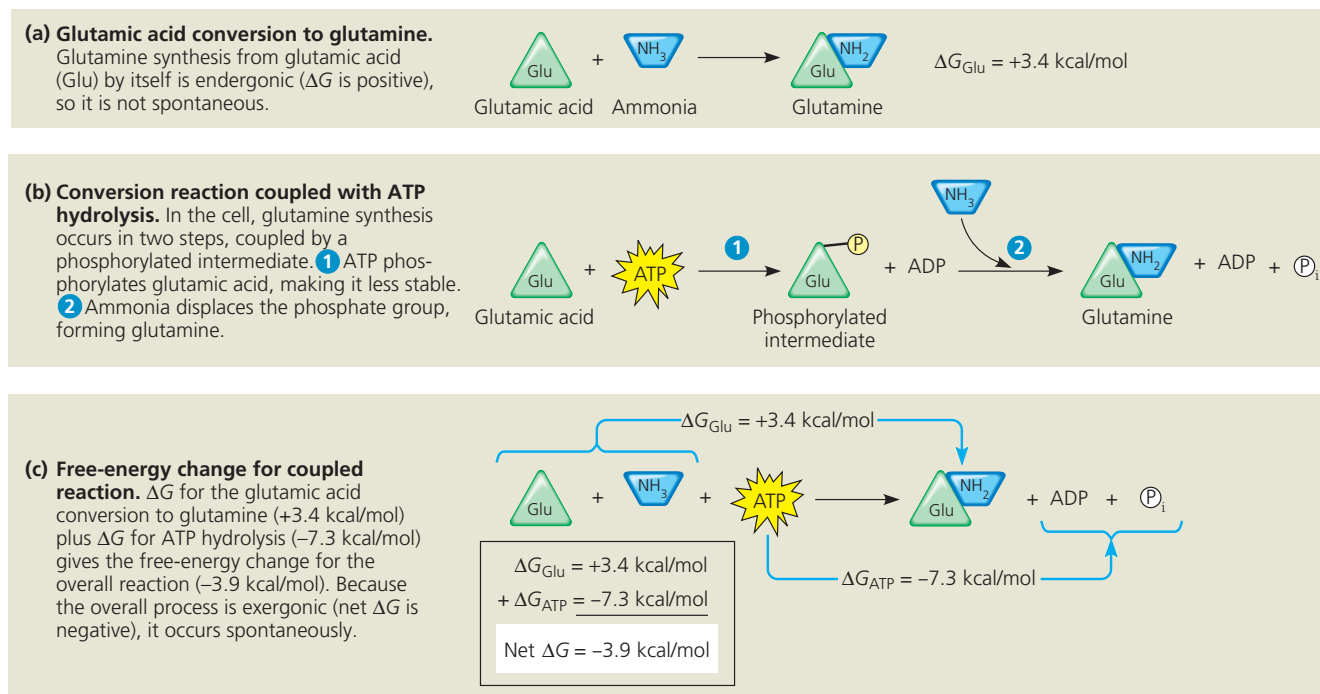
ATP is useful to the cell because the energy it releases on losing a phosphate group is somewhat greater than the energy most other molecules could deliver. But why does this hydrolysis release so much energy? If we reexamine the ATP molecule in **Figure 8.8a**, we can see that all three phosphate

groups are negatively charged. These like charges are crowded together, and their mutual repulsion contributes to the instability of this region of the ATP molecule. The triphosphate tail of ATP is the chemical equivalent of a compressed spring.

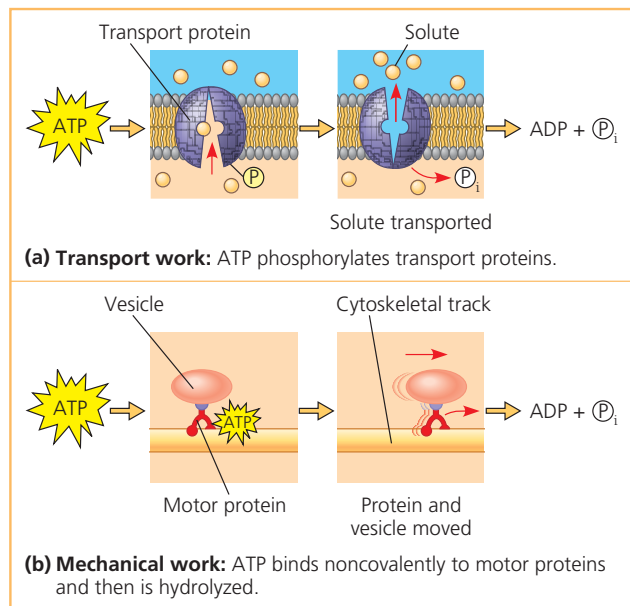
## How the Hydrolysis of ATP Performs Work

When ATP is hydrolyzed in a test tube, the release of free energy merely heats the surrounding water. In an organism, this same generation of heat can sometimes be beneficial. For instance, the process of shivering uses ATP hydrolysis during muscle contraction to generate heat and warm the body. In most cases in the cell, however, the generation of heat alone would be an inefficient (and potentially dangerous) use of a valuable energy resource. Instead, the cell’s proteins harness the energy released during ATP hydrolysis in several ways to perform the three types of cellular work—chemical, transport, and mechanical.

For example, with the help of specific enzymes, the cell is able to use the energy released by ATP hydrolysis directly to drive chemical reactions that, by themselves, are endergonic. If the  $\Delta G$  of an endergonic reaction is less than the amount of energy released by ATP hydrolysis, then the two reactions can be coupled so that, overall, the coupled reactions are exergonic (**Figure 8.9**). This usually involves the transfer of a phosphate



**▲ Figure 8.9 How ATP drives chemical work: Energy coupling using ATP hydrolysis.** In this example, the exergonic process of ATP hydrolysis is used to drive an endergonic process—the cellular synthesis of the amino acid glutamine from glutamic acid and ammonia.



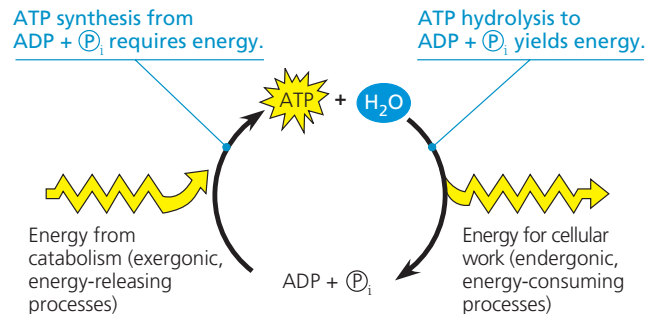
▲ **Figure 8.10 How ATP drives transport and mechanical work.** ATP hydrolysis causes changes in the shapes and binding affinities of proteins. This can occur either **(a)** directly, by phosphorylation, as shown for a membrane protein carrying out active transport of a solute (see also Figure 7.18), or **(b)** indirectly, via noncovalent binding of ATP and its hydrolytic products, as is the case for motor proteins that move vesicles (and other organelles) along cytoskeletal “tracks” in the cell (see also Figure 6.21).

group from ATP to some other molecule, such as the reactant. The recipient with the phosphate group covalently bonded to it is then called a **phosphorylated intermediate**. The key to coupling exergonic and endergonic reactions is the formation of this phosphorylated intermediate, which is more reactive (less stable) than the original unphosphorylated molecule.

Transport and mechanical work in the cell are also nearly always powered by the hydrolysis of ATP. In these cases, ATP hydrolysis leads to a change in a protein’s shape and often its ability to bind another molecule. Sometimes this occurs via a phosphorylated intermediate, as seen for the transport protein in **Figure 8.10a**. In most instances of mechanical work involving motor proteins “walking” along cytoskeletal elements (**Figure 8.10b**), a cycle occurs in which ATP is first bound noncovalently to the motor protein. Next, ATP is hydrolyzed, releasing ADP and  $\text{P}_i$ . Another ATP molecule can then bind. At each stage, the motor protein changes its shape and ability to bind the cytoskeleton, resulting in movement of the protein along the cytoskeletal track.

## The Regeneration of ATP

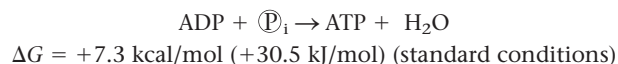
An organism at work uses ATP continuously, but ATP is a renewable resource that can be regenerated by the addition of phosphate to ADP (**Figure 8.11**). The free energy required to



▲ **Figure 8.11 The ATP cycle.** Energy released by breakdown reactions (catabolism) in the cell is used to phosphorylate ADP, regenerating ATP. Chemical potential energy stored in ATP drives most cellular work.

phosphorylate ADP comes from exergonic breakdown reactions (catabolism) in the cell. This shuttling of inorganic phosphate and energy is called the **ATP cycle**, and it couples the cell’s energy-yielding (exergonic) processes to the energy-consuming (endergonic) ones. The ATP cycle proceeds at an astonishing pace. For example, a working muscle cell recycles its entire pool of ATP in less than a minute. That turnover represents 10 million molecules of ATP consumed and regenerated per second per cell. If ATP could not be regenerated by the phosphorylation of ADP, humans would use up nearly their body weight in ATP each day.

Because both directions of a reversible process cannot be downhill, the regeneration of ATP from ADP and  $\text{P}_i$  is necessarily endergonic:



Since ATP formation from ADP and  $\text{P}_i$  is not spontaneous, free energy must be spent to make it occur. Catabolic (exergonic) pathways, especially cellular respiration, provide the energy for the endergonic process of making ATP. Plants also use light energy to produce ATP. Thus, the ATP cycle is a revolving door through which energy passes during its transfer from catabolic to anabolic pathways.

## CONCEPT CHECK 8.3

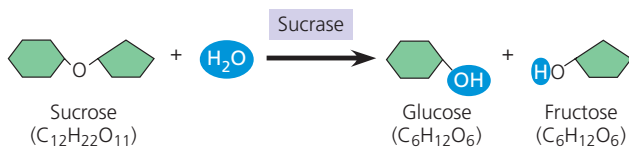
1. How does ATP typically transfer energy from exergonic to endergonic reactions in the cell?
2. Which of the following combinations has more free energy: glutamic acid + ammonia + ATP, or glutamine + ADP +  $\text{P}_i$ ? Explain your answer.
3. **MAKE CONNECTIONS** Considering what you learned in Concepts 7.3 and 7.4 (pp. 134–136), does Figure 8.10a show passive or active transport? Explain.

For suggested answers, see Appendix A.

## CONCEPT 8.4

### Enzymes speed up metabolic reactions by lowering energy barriers

The laws of thermodynamics tell us what will and will not happen under given conditions but say nothing about the rate of these processes. A spontaneous chemical reaction occurs without any requirement for outside energy, but it may occur so slowly that it is imperceptible. For example, even though the hydrolysis of sucrose (table sugar) to glucose and fructose is exergonic, occurring spontaneously with a release of free energy ( $\Delta G = -7$  kcal/mol), a solution of sucrose dissolved in sterile water will sit for years at room temperature with no appreciable hydrolysis. However, if we add a small amount of the enzyme sucrase to the solution, then all the sucrose may be hydrolyzed within seconds, as shown below:



How does the enzyme do this?

An **enzyme** is a macromolecule that acts as a **catalyst**, a chemical agent that speeds up a reaction without being consumed by the reaction. (In this chapter, we are focusing on enzymes that are proteins. RNA enzymes, also called ribozymes, are discussed in Chapters 17 and 25.) Without regulation by enzymes, chemical traffic through the pathways of metabolism would become terribly congested because many chemical reactions would take such a long time. In the next two sections, we will see what prevents a spontaneous reaction from occurring faster and how an enzyme changes the situation.

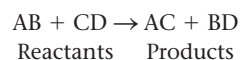
#### The Activation Energy Barrier

Every chemical reaction between molecules involves both bond breaking and bond forming. For example, the hydrolysis of sucrose involves breaking the bond between glucose and fructose and one of the bonds of a water molecule and then forming two new bonds, as shown above. Changing one molecule into another generally involves contorting the starting molecule into a highly unstable state before the reaction can proceed. This contortion can be compared to the bending of a metal key ring when you pry it open to add a new key. The key ring is highly unstable in its opened form but returns to a stable state once the key is threaded all the way onto the ring. To reach the contorted state where bonds can change, reactant molecules must absorb energy from their surroundings. When the new bonds of the product molecules form, energy

is released as heat, and the molecules return to stable shapes with lower energy than the contorted state.

The initial investment of energy for starting a reaction—the energy required to contort the reactant molecules so the bonds can break—is known as the *free energy of activation*, or **activation energy**, abbreviated  $E_A$  in this book. We can think of activation energy as the amount of energy needed to push the reactants to the top of an energy barrier, or uphill, so that the “downhill” part of the reaction can begin. Activation energy is often supplied in the form of thermal energy (heat) that the reactant molecules absorb from the surroundings. The absorption of thermal energy accelerates the reactant molecules, so they collide more often and more forcefully. It also agitates the atoms within the molecules, making the breakage of bonds more likely. When the molecules have absorbed enough energy for the bonds to break, the reactants are in an unstable condition known as the *transition state*.

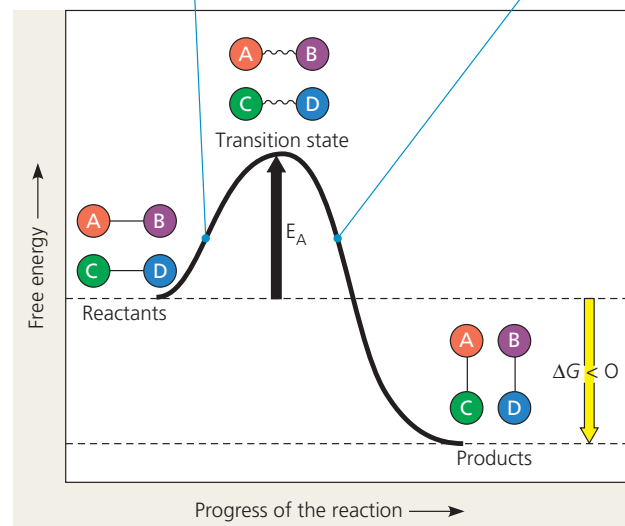
**Figure 8.12** graphs the energy changes for a hypothetical exergonic reaction that swaps portions of two reactant molecules:



The activation of the reactants is represented by the uphill portion of the graph, in which the free-energy content of the

The reactants AB and CD must absorb enough energy from the surroundings to reach the unstable transition state, where bonds can break.

After bonds have broken, new bonds form, releasing energy to the surroundings.



**▲ Figure 8.12 Energy profile of an exergonic reaction.** The “molecules” are hypothetical, with A, B, C, and D representing portions of the molecules. Thermodynamically, this is an exergonic reaction, with a negative  $\Delta G$ , and the reaction occurs spontaneously. However, the activation energy ( $E_A$ ) provides a barrier that determines the rate of the reaction.

**DRAW IT** Graph the progress of an endergonic reaction in which EF and GH form products EG and FH, assuming that the reactants must pass through a transition state.

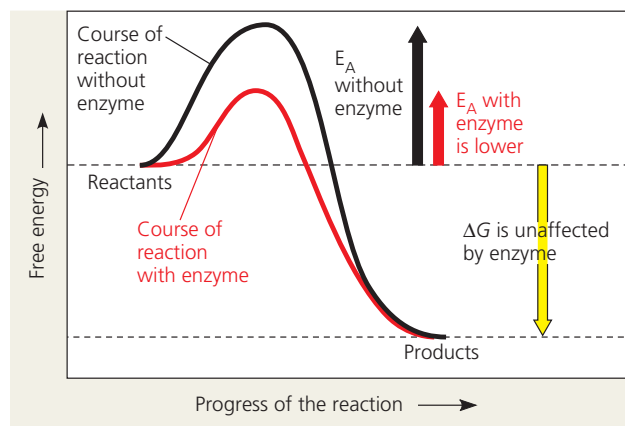
reactant molecules is increasing. At the summit, when energy equivalent to  $E_A$  has been absorbed, the reactants are in the transition state: They are activated, and their bonds can be broken. As the atoms then settle into their new, more stable bonding arrangements, energy is released to the surroundings. This corresponds to the downhill part of the curve, which shows the loss of free energy by the molecules. The overall decrease in free energy means that  $E_A$  is repaid with interest, as the formation of new bonds releases more energy than was invested in the breaking of old bonds..

The reaction shown in Figure 8.12 is exergonic and occurs spontaneously ( $\Delta G < 0$ ). However, the activation energy provides a barrier that determines the rate of the reaction. The reactants must absorb enough energy to reach the top of the activation energy barrier before the reaction can occur. For some reactions,  $E_A$  is modest enough that even at room temperature there is sufficient thermal energy for many of the reactant molecules to reach the transition state in a short time. In most cases, however,  $E_A$  is so high and the transition state is reached so rarely that the reaction will hardly proceed at all. In these cases, the reaction will occur at a noticeable rate only if the reactants are heated. For example, the reaction of gasoline and oxygen is exergonic and will occur spontaneously, but energy is required for the molecules to reach the transition state and react. Only when the spark plugs fire in an automobile engine can there be the explosive release of energy that pushes the pistons. Without a spark, a mixture of gasoline hydrocarbons and oxygen will not react because the  $E_A$  barrier is too high.

### How Enzymes Lower the $E_A$ Barrier

Proteins, DNA, and other complex molecules of the cell are rich in free energy and have the potential to decompose spontaneously; that is, the laws of thermodynamics favor their breakdown. These molecules persist only because at temperatures typical for cells, few molecules can make it over the hump of activation energy. However, the barriers for selected reactions must occasionally be surmounted for cells to carry out the processes needed for life. Heat speeds a reaction by allowing reactants to attain the transition state more often, but this solution would be inappropriate for biological systems. First, high temperature denatures proteins and kills cells. Second, heat would speed up *all* reactions, not just those that are needed. Instead of heat, organisms use catalysis to speed up reactions.

An enzyme catalyzes a reaction by lowering the  $E_A$  barrier (Figure 8.13), enabling the reactant molecules to absorb enough energy to reach the transition state even at moderate temperatures. An enzyme cannot change the  $\Delta G$  for a reaction; it cannot make an endergonic reaction exergonic. Enzymes can only hasten reactions that would eventually occur anyway, but this function makes it possible for the cell to have a dynamic

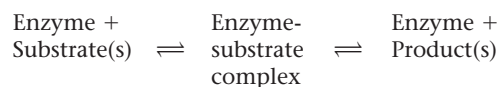


▲ **Figure 8.13 The effect of an enzyme on activation energy.** Without affecting the free-energy change ( $\Delta G$ ) for a reaction, an enzyme speeds the reaction by reducing its activation energy ( $E_A$ ).

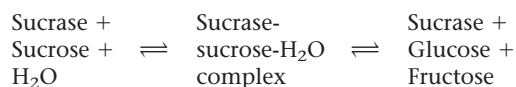
metabolism, routing chemicals smoothly through the cell's metabolic pathways. And because enzymes are very specific for the reactions they catalyze, they determine which chemical processes will be going on in the cell at any particular time.

### Substrate Specificity of Enzymes

The reactant an enzyme acts on is referred to as the enzyme's **substrate**. The enzyme binds to its substrate (or substrates, when there are two or more reactants), forming an **enzyme-substrate complex**. While enzyme and substrate are joined, the catalytic action of the enzyme converts the substrate to the product (or products) of the reaction. The overall process can be summarized as follows:



For example, the enzyme sucrase (most enzyme names end in *-ase*) catalyzes the hydrolysis of the disaccharide sucrose into its two monosaccharides, glucose and fructose (see p. 152):



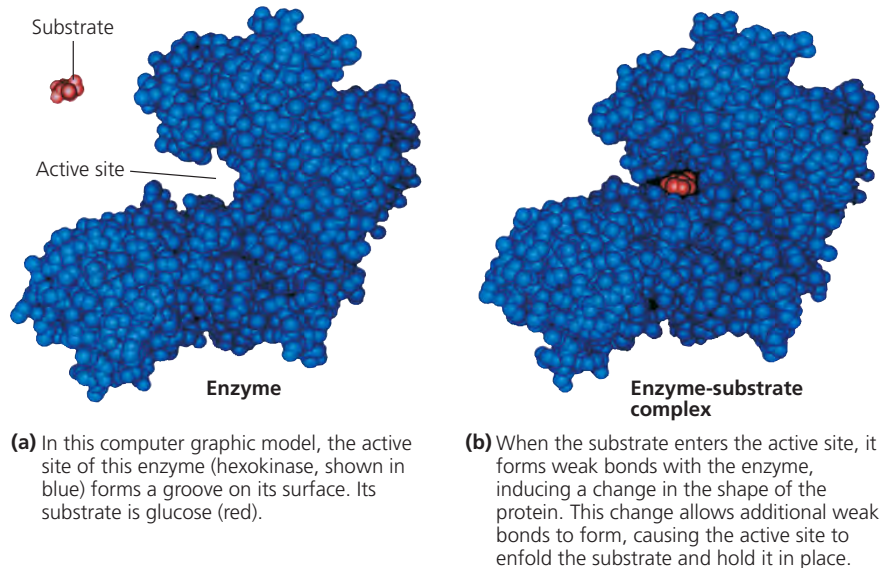
The reaction catalyzed by each enzyme is very specific; an enzyme can recognize its specific substrate even among closely related compounds. For instance, sucrase will act only on sucrose and will not bind to other disaccharides, such as maltose. What accounts for this molecular recognition? Recall that most enzymes are proteins, and proteins are macromolecules with unique three-dimensional configurations. The specificity of an enzyme results from its shape, which is a consequence of its amino acid sequence.

Only a restricted region of the enzyme molecule actually binds to the substrate. This region, called the **active site**, is typically a pocket or groove on the surface of the enzyme where catalysis occurs (**Figure 8.14a**). Usually, the active site is formed by only a few of the enzyme's amino acids, with the rest of the protein molecule providing a framework that determines the configuration of the active site. The specificity of an enzyme is attributed to a compatible fit between the shape of its active site and the shape of the substrate.

An enzyme is not a stiff structure locked into a given shape. In fact, recent work by biochemists has shown clearly that enzymes (and other proteins as well) seem to “dance” between subtly different shapes in a dynamic equilibrium, with slight differences in free energy for each “pose.” The shape that best fits the substrate isn't necessarily the one with the lowest energy, but during the very short time the enzyme takes on this shape, its active site can bind to the substrate. It has been known for more than 50 years that the active site itself is also not a rigid receptacle for the substrate. As the substrate enters the active site, the enzyme changes shape slightly due to interactions between the substrate's chemical groups and chemical groups on the side chains of the amino acids that form the active site. This shape change makes the active site fit even more snugly around the substrate (**Figure 8.14b**). This **induced fit** is like a clasping handshake. Induced fit brings chemical groups of the active site into positions that enhance their ability to catalyze the chemical reaction.

### Catalysis in the Enzyme's Active Site

In most enzymatic reactions, the substrate is held in the active site by so-called weak interactions, such as hydrogen bonds and ionic bonds. R groups of a few of the amino acids that make up the active site catalyze the conversion of substrate to product, and the product departs from the active site. The enzyme is then free to take another substrate molecule into its active site. The entire cycle happens so fast that a single enzyme molecule typically acts on about a thousand substrate molecules per second. Some enzymes are much faster. Enzymes, like other catalysts, emerge from the reaction in their original form. Therefore, very small amounts of enzyme can have a huge metabolic impact by functioning over and over again in catalytic cycles. **Figure 8.15** shows a catalytic cycle involving two substrates and two products.



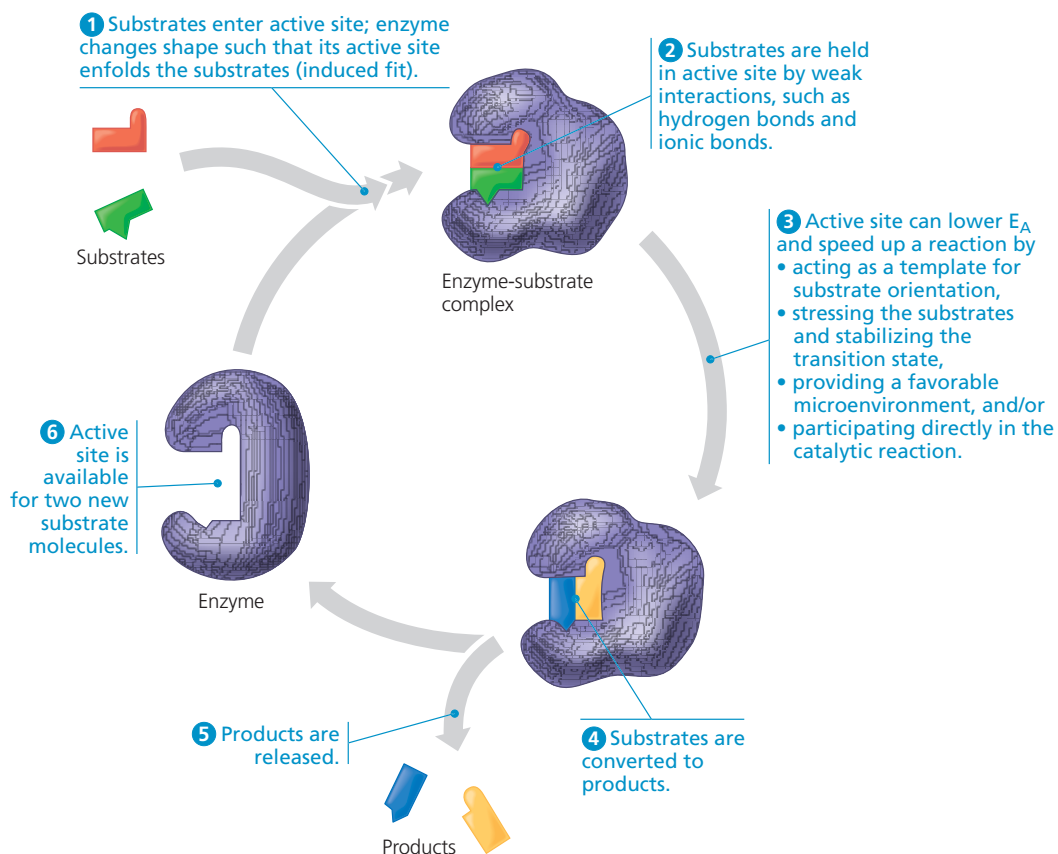
▲ **Figure 8.14** Induced fit between an enzyme and its substrate.

Most metabolic reactions are reversible, and an enzyme can catalyze either the forward or the reverse reaction, depending on which direction has a negative  $\Delta G$ . This in turn depends mainly on the relative concentrations of reactants and products. The net effect is always in the direction of equilibrium.

Enzymes use a variety of mechanisms that lower activation energy and speed up a reaction (see **Figure 8.15**, step ③). First, in reactions involving two or more reactants, the active site provides a template on which the substrates can come together in the proper orientation for a reaction to occur between them. Second, as the active site of an enzyme clutches the bound substrates, the enzyme may stretch the substrate molecules toward their transition-state form, stressing and bending critical chemical bonds that must be broken during the reaction. Because  $E_A$  is proportional to the difficulty of breaking the bonds, distorting the substrate helps it approach the transition state and thus reduces the amount of free energy that must be absorbed to achieve that state.

Third, the active site may also provide a microenvironment that is more conducive to a particular type of reaction than the solution itself would be without the enzyme. For example, if the active site has amino acids with acidic R groups, the active site may be a pocket of low pH in an otherwise neutral cell. In such cases, an acidic amino acid may facilitate  $H^+$  transfer to the substrate as a key step in catalyzing the reaction.

A fourth mechanism of catalysis is the direct participation of the active site in the chemical reaction. Sometimes this process even involves brief covalent bonding between the substrate and the side chain of an amino acid of the enzyme. Subsequent steps of the reaction restore the side chains to their original states, so that the active site is the same after the reaction as it was before.



◀ **Figure 8.15 The active site and catalytic cycle of an enzyme.** An enzyme can convert one or more reactant molecules to one or more product molecules. The enzyme shown here converts two substrate molecules to two product molecules.

The rate at which a particular amount of enzyme converts substrate to product is partly a function of the initial concentration of the substrate: The more substrate molecules that are available, the more frequently they access the active sites of the enzyme molecules. However, there is a limit to how fast the reaction can be pushed by adding more substrate to a fixed concentration of enzyme. At some point, the concentration of substrate will be high enough that all enzyme molecules have their active sites engaged. As soon as the product exits an active site, another substrate molecule enters. At this substrate concentration, the enzyme is said to be *saturated*, and the rate of the reaction is determined by the speed at which the active site converts substrate to product. When an enzyme population is saturated, the only way to increase the rate of product formation is to add more enzyme. Cells often increase the rate of a reaction by producing more enzyme molecules.

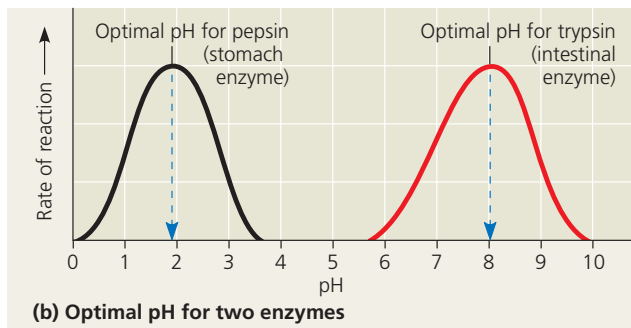
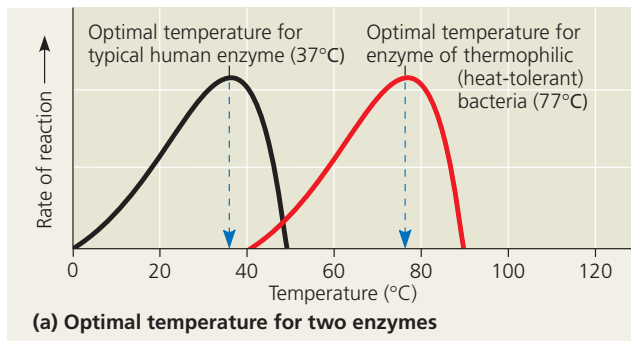
### Effects of Local Conditions on Enzyme Activity

The activity of an enzyme—how efficiently the enzyme functions—is affected by general environmental factors, such as temperature and pH. It can also be affected by chemicals that specifically influence that enzyme. In fact, researchers have learned much about enzyme function by employing such chemicals.

### Effects of Temperature and pH

Recall from Chapter 5 that the three-dimensional structures of proteins are sensitive to their environment. As a consequence, each enzyme works better under some conditions than under other conditions, because these *optimal conditions* favor the most active shape for the enzyme molecule.

Temperature and pH are environmental factors important in the activity of an enzyme. Up to a point, the rate of an enzymatic reaction increases with increasing temperature, partly because substrates collide with active sites more frequently when the molecules move rapidly. Above that temperature, however, the speed of the enzymatic reaction drops sharply. The thermal agitation of the enzyme molecule disrupts the hydrogen bonds, ionic bonds, and other weak interactions that stabilize the active shape of the enzyme, and the protein molecule eventually denatures. Each enzyme has an optimal temperature at which its reaction rate is greatest. Without denaturing the enzyme, this temperature allows the greatest number of molecular collisions and the fastest conversion of the reactants to product molecules. Most human enzymes have optimal temperatures of about 35–40°C (close to human body temperature). The thermophilic bacteria that live in hot springs contain enzymes with optimal temperatures of 70°C or higher (**Figure 8.16a** on the next page).



**▲ Figure 8.16 Environmental factors affecting enzyme activity.** Each enzyme has an optimal **(a)** temperature and **(b)** pH that favor the most active shape of the protein molecule.

**DRAW IT** Given that a mature lysosome has an internal pH of around 4.5, draw a curve in **(b)** showing what you would predict for a lysosomal enzyme, labeling its optimal pH.

Just as each enzyme has an optimal temperature, it also has a pH at which it is most active. The optimal pH values for most enzymes fall in the range of pH 6–8, but there are exceptions. For example, pepsin, a digestive enzyme in the human stomach, works best at pH 2. Such an acidic environment denatures most enzymes, but pepsin is adapted to maintain its functional three-dimensional structure in the acidic environment of the stomach. In contrast, trypsin, a digestive enzyme residing in the alkaline environment of the human intestine, has an optimal pH of 8 and would be denatured in the stomach (**Figure 8.16b**).

### Cofactors

Many enzymes require nonprotein helpers for catalytic activity. These adjuncts, called **cofactors**, may be bound tightly to the enzyme as permanent residents, or they may bind loosely and reversibly along with the substrate. The cofactors of some enzymes are inorganic, such as the metal atoms zinc, iron, and copper in ionic form. If the cofactor is an organic molecule, it is more specifically called a **coenzyme**. Most vitamins are important in nutrition because they act as coenzymes or raw materials from which coenzymes are made. Cofactors function in various ways, but in all cases where they

are used, they perform a crucial chemical function in catalysis. You'll encounter examples of cofactors later in the book.

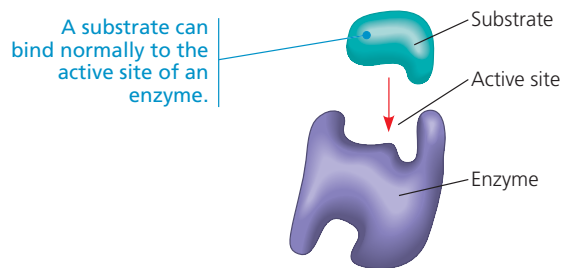
### Enzyme Inhibitors

Certain chemicals selectively inhibit the action of specific enzymes, and we have learned a lot about enzyme function by studying the effects of these molecules. If the inhibitor attaches to the enzyme by covalent bonds, inhibition is usually irreversible.

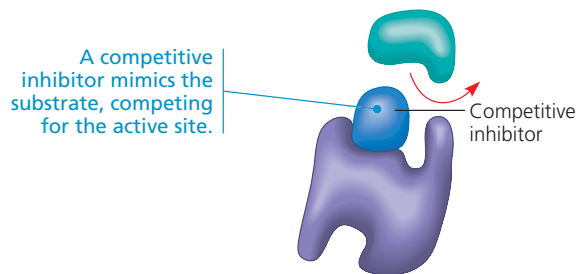
Many enzyme inhibitors, however, bind to the enzyme by weak interactions, in which case inhibition is reversible. Some reversible inhibitors resemble the normal substrate molecule and compete for admission into the active site (**Figure 8.17a** and **b**). These mimics, called **competitive inhibitors**, reduce

**▼ Figure 8.17 Inhibition of enzyme activity.**

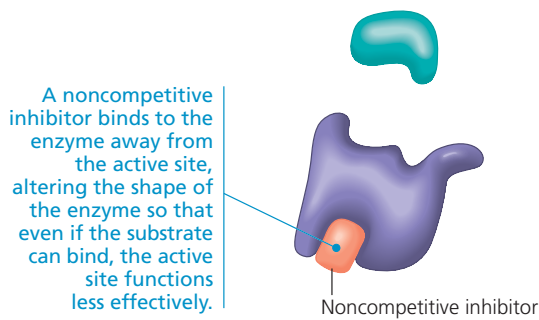
#### (a) Normal binding



#### (b) Competitive inhibition



#### (c) Noncompetitive inhibition



the productivity of enzymes by blocking substrates from entering active sites. This kind of inhibition can be overcome by increasing the concentration of substrate so that as active sites become available, more substrate molecules than inhibitor molecules are around to gain entry to the sites.

In contrast, **noncompetitive inhibitors** do not directly compete with the substrate to bind to the enzyme at the active site (Figure 8.17c). Instead, they impede enzymatic reactions by binding to another part of the enzyme. This interaction causes the enzyme molecule to change its shape in such a way that the active site becomes less effective at catalyzing the conversion of substrate to product.

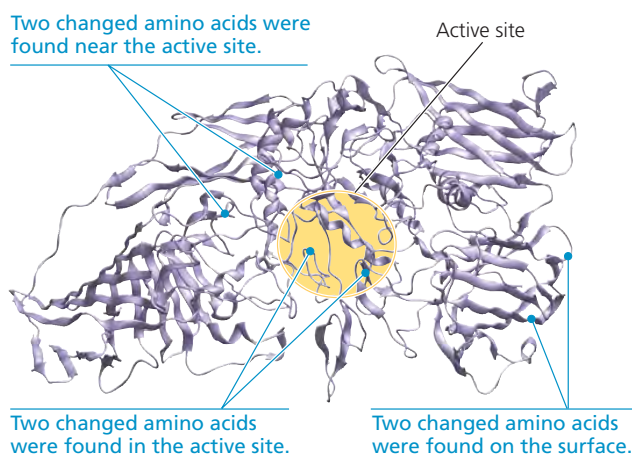
Toxins and poisons are often irreversible enzyme inhibitors. An example is sarin, a nerve gas that caused the death of several people and injury to many others when it was released by terrorists in the Tokyo subway in 1995. This small molecule binds covalently to the R group on the amino acid serine, which is found in the active site of acetylcholinesterase, an enzyme important in the nervous system. Other examples include the pesticides DDT and parathion, inhibitors of key enzymes in the nervous system. Finally, many antibiotics are inhibitors of specific enzymes in bacteria. For instance, penicillin blocks the active site of an enzyme that many bacteria use to make their cell walls.

Citing enzyme inhibitors that are metabolic poisons may give the impression that enzyme inhibition is generally abnormal and harmful. In fact, molecules naturally present in the cell often regulate enzyme activity by acting as inhibitors. Such regulation—selective inhibition—is essential to the control of cellular metabolism, as we will discuss in Concept 8.5.

## The Evolution of Enzymes

**EVOLUTION** Thus far, biochemists have discovered and named more than 4,000 different enzymes in various species, and this list probably represents the tip of the proverbial iceberg. How did this grand profusion of enzymes arise? Recall that most enzymes are proteins, and proteins are encoded by genes. A permanent change in a gene, known as a *mutation*, can result in a protein with one or more changed amino acids. In the case of an enzyme, if the changed amino acids are in the active site or some other crucial region, the altered enzyme might have a novel activity or might bind to a different substrate. Under environmental conditions where the new function benefits the organism, natural selection would tend to favor the mutated form of the gene, causing it to persist in the population. This simplified model is generally accepted as the main way in which the multitude of different enzymes arose over the past few billion years of life's history.

Data supporting this model have been collected by researchers using a lab procedure that mimics evolution in natural populations. One group tested whether the function of an enzyme called  $\beta$ -galactosidase could change over time in populations of the bacterium *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*).  $\beta$ -galactosidase



▲ **Figure 8.18 Mimicking evolution of an enzyme with a new function.** After seven rounds of mutation and selection in a lab, the enzyme  $\beta$ -galactosidase evolved into an enzyme specialized for breaking down a sugar different from lactose. This ribbon model shows one subunit of the altered enzyme; six amino acids were different.

breaks down the disaccharide lactose into the simple sugars glucose and galactose. Using molecular techniques, the researchers introduced random mutations into *E. coli* genes and then tested the bacteria for their ability to break down a slightly different disaccharide (one that has the sugar fucose in place of galactose). They selected the mutant bacteria that could do this best and exposed them to another round of mutation and selection. After seven rounds, the “evolved” enzyme bound the new substrate several hundred times more strongly, and broke it down 10 to 20 times more quickly, than did the original enzyme.

The researchers found that six amino acids had changed in the enzyme altered in this experiment. Two of these changed amino acids were in the active site, two were nearby, and two were on the surface of the protein (Figure 8.18). This experiment and others like it strengthen the notion that a few changes can indeed alter enzyme function.

## CONCEPT CHECK 8.4

1. Many spontaneous reactions occur very slowly. Why don't all spontaneous reactions occur instantly?
2. Why do enzymes act only on very specific substrates?
3. **WHAT IF?** Malonate is an inhibitor of the enzyme succinate dehydrogenase. How would you determine whether malonate is a competitive or noncompetitive inhibitor?
4. **MAKE CONNECTIONS** In nature, what conditions could lead to natural selection favoring bacteria with enzymes that could break down the fucose-containing disaccharide discussed above? See the discussion of natural selection in Concept 1.2, pages 14–16.

For suggested answers, see Appendix A.



## CONCEPT 8.5

### Regulation of enzyme activity helps control metabolism

Chemical chaos would result if all of a cell's metabolic pathways were operating simultaneously. Intrinsic to life's processes is a cell's ability to tightly regulate its metabolic pathways by controlling when and where its various enzymes are active. It does this either by switching on and off the genes that encode specific enzymes (as we will discuss in Unit Three) or, as we discuss here, by regulating the activity of enzymes once they are made.

#### Allosteric Regulation of Enzymes

In many cases, the molecules that naturally regulate enzyme activity in a cell behave something like reversible noncompetitive inhibitors (see Figure 8.17c): These regulatory molecules change an enzyme's shape and the functioning of its active site by binding to a site elsewhere on the molecule, via noncovalent interactions. **Allosteric regulation** is the term used to describe any case in which a protein's function at one site is affected by the binding of a regulatory molecule to a separate site. It may result in either inhibition or stimulation of an enzyme's activity.

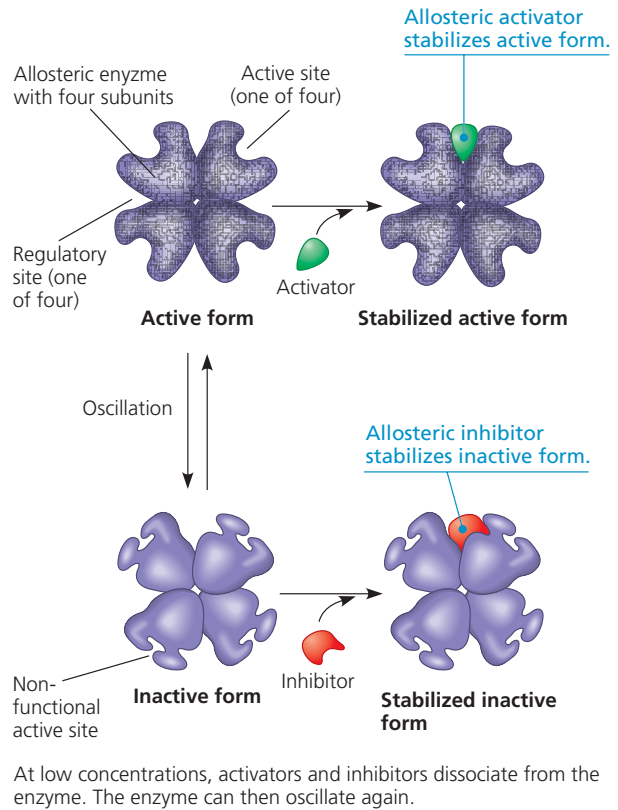
#### Allosteric Activation and Inhibition

Most enzymes known to be allosterically regulated are constructed from two or more subunits, each composed of a polypeptide chain with its own active site. The entire complex oscillates between two different shapes, one catalytically active and the other inactive (Figure 8.19a). In the simplest kind of allosteric regulation, an activating or inhibiting regulatory molecule binds to a regulatory site (sometimes called an allosteric site), often located where subunits join. The binding of an *activator* to a regulatory site stabilizes the shape that has functional active sites, whereas the binding of an *inhibitor* stabilizes the inactive form of the enzyme. The subunits of an allosteric enzyme fit together in such a way that a shape change in one subunit is transmitted to all others. Through this interaction of subunits, a single activator or inhibitor molecule that binds to one regulatory site will affect the active sites of all subunits.

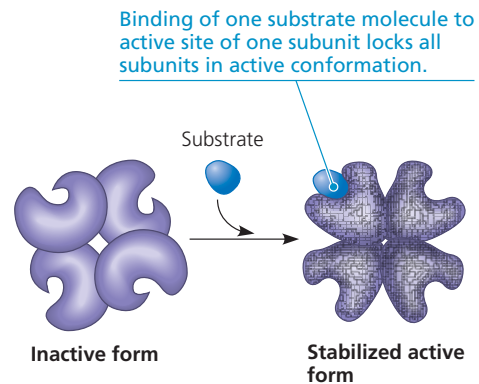
Fluctuating concentrations of regulators can cause a sophisticated pattern of response in the activity of cellular enzymes. The products of ATP hydrolysis (ADP and  $P_i$ ), for example, play a complex role in balancing the flow of traffic between anabolic and catabolic pathways by their effects on key enzymes. ATP binds to several catabolic enzymes allosterically, lowering their affinity for substrate and thus inhibiting their activity. ADP, however, functions as an activator of the same enzymes. This is logical because catabolism functions

▼ Figure 8.19 Allosteric regulation of enzyme activity.

#### (a) Allosteric activators and inhibitors



#### (b) Cooperativity: another type of allosteric activation



in regenerating ATP. If ATP production lags behind its use, ADP accumulates and activates the enzymes that speed up catabolism, producing more ATP. If the supply of ATP exceeds demand, then catabolism slows down as ATP molecules accumulate and bind to the same enzymes, inhibiting them. (You'll see specific examples of this type of regulation when

you learn about cellular respiration in the next chapter.) ATP, ADP, and other related molecules also affect key enzymes in anabolic pathways. In this way, allosteric enzymes control the rates of important reactions in both sorts of metabolic pathways.

In another kind of allosteric activation, a *substrate* molecule binding to one active site in a multisubunit enzyme triggers a shape change in all the subunits, thereby increasing catalytic activity at the other active sites (**Figure 8.19b**). Called **cooperativity**, this mechanism amplifies the response of enzymes to substrates: One substrate molecule primes an enzyme to act on additional substrate molecules more readily. Cooperativity is considered “allosteric” regulation because binding of the substrate to one active site affects catalysis in another active site.

Although the vertebrate oxygen transport protein hemoglobin is not an enzyme, classic studies of cooperative binding in this protein have elucidated the principle of cooperativity. Hemoglobin is made up of four subunits, each of which has an oxygen-binding site (see Figure 5.20). The binding of an oxygen molecule to one binding site increases the affinity for oxygen of the remaining binding sites. Thus, where oxygen is at high levels, such as in the lungs or gills, hemoglobin’s affinity for oxygen increases as more binding sites are filled. In oxygen-deprived tissues, however, the release of each oxygen molecule decreases the oxygen affinity of the other binding sites, resulting in the release of oxygen where it is most needed. Cooperativity works similarly in multisubunit enzymes that have been studied.

### Identification of Allosteric Regulators

Although allosteric regulation is probably quite widespread, relatively few of the many known metabolic enzymes have been shown to be regulated in this way. Allosteric regulatory molecules are hard to characterize, in part because they tend to bind the enzyme at low affinity and are therefore hard to isolate. Recently, however, pharmaceutical companies have turned their attention to allosteric regulators. These molecules are attractive drug candidates for enzyme regulation because they exhibit higher specificity for particular enzymes than do inhibitors that bind to the active site. (An active site may be similar to the active site in another, related enzyme, whereas allosteric regulatory sites appear to be quite distinct between enzymes.)

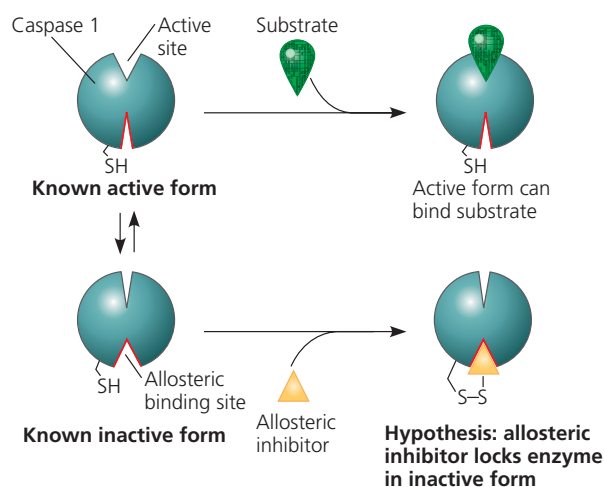
**Figure 8.20** describes a search for allosteric regulators, carried out as a collaboration between researchers at the University of California at San Francisco and a company called Sunesis Pharmaceuticals. The study was designed to find allosteric inhibitors of *caspases*, protein-digesting enzymes that play an active role in inflammation and cell death. (You’ll learn more about caspases and cell death in Chapter 11.) By specifically regulating these enzymes, we may be able to better manage inappropriate inflammatory responses, such as those commonly seen in vascular and neurodegenerative diseases.

▼ **Figure 8.20**

## INQUIRY

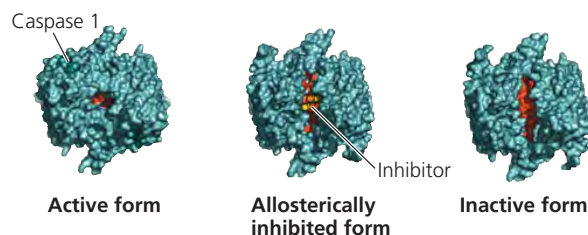
### Are there allosteric inhibitors of caspase enzymes?

**EXPERIMENT** In an effort to identify allosteric inhibitors of caspases, Justin Scheer and co-workers screened close to 8,000 compounds for their ability to bind to a possible allosteric binding site in caspase 1 and inhibit the enzyme’s activity. Each compound was designed to form a disulfide bond with a cysteine near the site in order to stabilize the low-affinity interaction that is expected of an allosteric inhibitor. As the caspases are known to exist in both active and inactive forms, the researchers hypothesized that this linkage might lock the enzyme in the inactive form.



To test this model, X-ray diffraction analysis was used to determine the structure of caspase 1 when bound to one of the inhibitors and to compare it with the active and inactive structures.

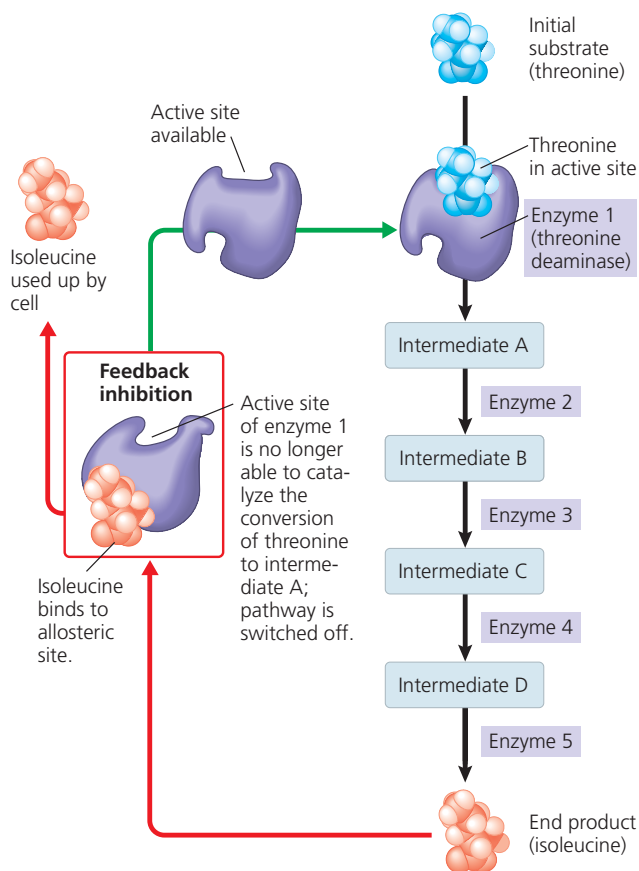
**RESULTS** Fourteen compounds were identified that could bind to the proposed allosteric site (red) of caspase 1 and block enzymatic activity. The enzyme’s shape when one such inhibitor was bound resembled the inactive caspase 1 more than the active form.



**CONCLUSION** That particular inhibitory compound apparently locks the enzyme in its inactive form, as expected for a true allosteric regulator. The data therefore support the existence of an allosteric inhibitory site on caspase 1 that can be used to control enzymatic activity.

**SOURCE** J. M. Scheer et al., A common allosteric site and mechanism in caspases, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 103: 7595–7600 (2006).

**WHAT IF?** As a control, the researchers broke the disulfide linkage between one of the inhibitors and the caspase. Assuming that the experimental solution contains no other inhibitors, how would you expect the caspase 1 activity to be affected?



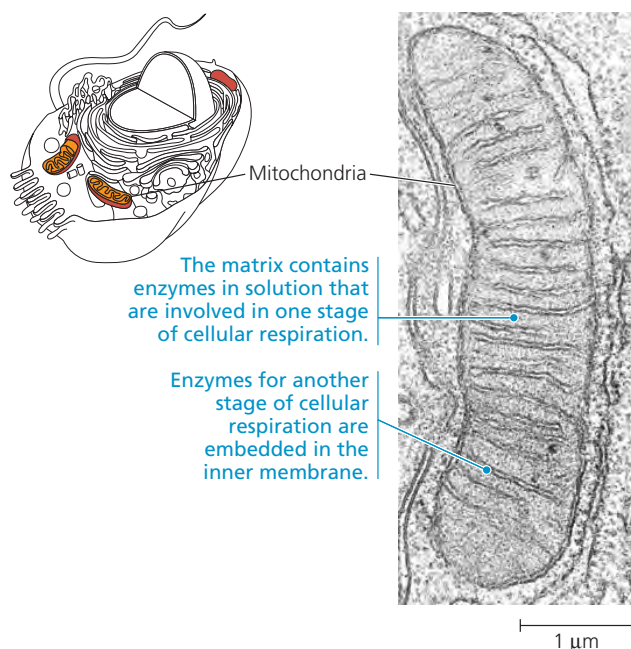
▲ **Figure 8.21** Feedback inhibition in isoleucine synthesis.

### Feedback Inhibition

When ATP allosterically inhibits an enzyme in an ATP-generating pathway, as we discussed earlier, the result is feedback inhibition, a common mode of metabolic control. In **feedback inhibition**, a metabolic pathway is switched off by the inhibitory binding of its end product to an enzyme that acts early in the pathway. **Figure 8.21** shows an example of this control mechanism operating on an anabolic pathway. Certain cells use this five-step pathway to synthesize the amino acid isoleucine from threonine, another amino acid. As isoleucine accumulates, it slows down its own synthesis by allosterically inhibiting the enzyme for the first step of the pathway. Feedback inhibition thereby prevents the cell from wasting chemical resources by making more isoleucine than is necessary.

### Specific Localization of Enzymes Within the Cell

The cell is not just a bag of chemicals with thousands of different kinds of enzymes and substrates in a random mix. The cell is compartmentalized, and cellular structures help bring order to metabolic pathways. In some cases, a team of enzymes for several steps of a metabolic pathway are assembled into a multienzyme complex. The arrangement facilitates the



▲ **Figure 8.22** Organelles and structural order in metabolism. Organelles such as the mitochondrion (TEM) contain enzymes that carry out specific functions, in this case cellular respiration.

sequence of reactions, with the product from the first enzyme becoming the substrate for an adjacent enzyme in the complex, and so on, until the end product is released. Some enzymes and enzyme complexes have fixed locations within the cell and act as structural components of particular membranes. Others are in solution within particular membrane-enclosed eukaryotic organelles, each with its own internal chemical environment. For example, in eukaryotic cells, the enzymes for cellular respiration reside in specific locations within mitochondria (**Figure 8.22**).

In this chapter, you have learned that metabolism, the intersecting set of chemical pathways characteristic of life, is a choreographed interplay of thousands of different kinds of cellular molecules. In the next chapter, we explore cellular respiration, the major catabolic pathway that breaks down organic molecules, releasing energy for the crucial processes of life.

## CONCEPT CHECK 8.5

1. How do an activator and an inhibitor have different effects on an allosterically regulated enzyme?
2. **WHAT IF?** Imagine you are a pharmacological researcher who wants to design a drug that inhibits a particular enzyme. Upon reading the scientific literature, you find that the enzyme's active site is similar to that of several other enzymes. What might be a good approach to developing your inhibitor drug?

For suggested answers, see Appendix A.

## 8

## CHAPTER REVIEW

## SUMMARY OF KEY CONCEPTS

## CONCEPT 8.1

An organism's metabolism transforms matter and energy, subject to the laws of thermodynamics (pp. 142–145)

- **Metabolism** is the collection of chemical reactions that occur in an organism. **Enzymes** catalyze reactions in intersecting **metabolic pathways**, which may be **catabolic** (breaking down molecules, releasing energy) or **anabolic** (building molecules, consuming energy).
- **Energy** is the capacity to cause change; some forms of energy do work by moving matter. **Kinetic energy** is associated with motion and includes **thermal energy (heat)** associated with random motion of atoms or molecules. **Potential energy** is related to the location or structure of matter and includes **chemical energy** possessed by a molecule due to its structure.
- **The first law of thermodynamics**, conservation of energy, states that energy cannot be created or destroyed, only transferred or transformed. The **second law of thermodynamics** states that **spontaneous processes**, those requiring no outside input of energy, increase the **entropy** (disorder) of the universe.

? Explain how the highly ordered structure of a cell does not conflict with the second law of thermodynamics.

## CONCEPT 8.2

The free-energy change of a reaction tells us whether or not the reaction occurs spontaneously (pp. 146–149)

- A living system's **free energy** is energy that can do work under cellular conditions. The change in free energy ( $\Delta G$ ) during a biological process is related directly to enthalpy change ( $\Delta H$ ) and to the change in entropy ( $\Delta S$ ):  $\Delta G = \Delta H - T\Delta S$ . Organisms live at the expense of free energy. During a spontaneous change, free energy decreases and the stability of a system increases. At maximum stability, the system is at equilibrium and can do no work.
- In an **exergonic** (spontaneous) chemical reaction, the products have less free energy than the reactants ( $-\Delta G$ ). **Endergonic** (nonspontaneous) reactions require an input of energy ( $+\Delta G$ ). The addition of starting materials and the removal of end products prevent metabolism from reaching equilibrium.

? Explain the meaning of each component in the equation for the change in free energy of a spontaneous chemical reaction. Why are spontaneous reactions important in the metabolism of a cell?

## CONCEPT 8.3

ATP powers cellular work by coupling exergonic reactions to endergonic reactions (pp. 149–151)

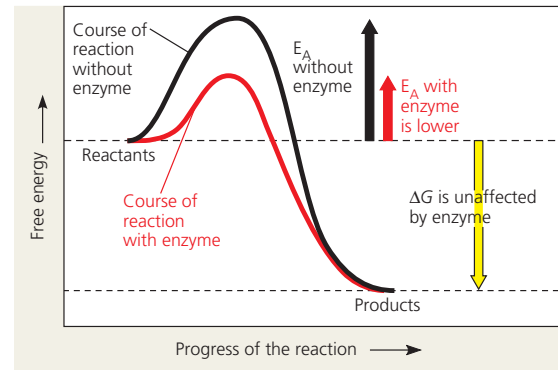
- **ATP** is the cell's energy shuttle. Hydrolysis of its terminal phosphate yields ADP and  $\text{P}_i$  and releases free energy.
- Through **energy coupling**, the exergonic process of ATP hydrolysis drives endergonic reactions by transfer of a phosphate group to specific reactants, forming a **phosphorylated intermediate** that is more reactive. ATP hydrolysis (sometimes with protein phosphorylation) also causes changes in the shape and binding affinities of transport and motor proteins.
- Catabolic pathways drive regeneration of ATP from ADP +  $\text{P}_i$ .

? Describe the ATP cycle: How is ATP used and regenerated in a cell?

## CONCEPT 8.4

Enzymes speed up metabolic reactions by lowering energy barriers (pp. 152–157)

- In a chemical reaction, the energy necessary to break the bonds of the reactants is the **activation energy**,  $E_A$ .
- **Enzymes** lower the  $E_A$  barrier:



- Each type of enzyme has a unique **active site** that combines specifically with its **substrate(s)**, the reactant molecule(s) on which it acts. The enzyme changes shape slightly when it binds the substrate(s) (**induced fit**).
- The active site can lower an  $E_A$  barrier by orienting substrates correctly, straining their bonds, providing a favorable microenvironment, or even covalently bonding with the substrate.
- Each enzyme has an optimal temperature and pH. Inhibitors reduce enzyme function. A **competitive inhibitor** binds to the active site, whereas a **noncompetitive inhibitor** binds to a different site on the enzyme.
- Natural selection, acting on organisms with mutant genes encoding altered enzymes, is a major evolutionary force responsible for the diverse array of enzymes found in organisms.

? How do both activation energy barriers and enzymes help maintain the structural and metabolic order of life?

## CONCEPT 8.5

Regulation of enzyme activity helps control metabolism (pp. 158–160)

- Many enzymes are subject to **allosteric regulation**: Regulatory molecules, either activators or inhibitors, bind to specific regulatory sites, affecting the shape and function of the enzyme. In **cooperativity**, binding of one substrate molecule can stimulate binding or activity at other active sites. In **feedback inhibition**, the end product of a metabolic pathway allosterically inhibits the enzyme for a previous step in the pathway.
- Some enzymes are grouped into complexes, some are incorporated into membranes, and some are contained inside organelles, increasing the efficiency of metabolic processes.

? What roles do allosteric regulation and feedback inhibition play in the metabolism of a cell?

## TEST YOUR UNDERSTANDING

### LEVEL 1: KNOWLEDGE/COMPREHENSION

- Choose the pair of terms that correctly completes this sentence: Catabolism is to anabolism as \_\_\_\_\_ is to \_\_\_\_\_.
  - exergonic; spontaneous
  - exergonic; endergonic
  - free energy; entropy
  - work; energy
  - entropy; enthalpy
- Most cells cannot harness heat to perform work because
  - heat is not a form of energy.
  - cells do not have much heat; they are relatively cool.
  - temperature is usually uniform throughout a cell.
  - heat can never be used to do work.
  - heat must remain constant during work.
- Which of the following metabolic processes can occur without a net influx of energy from some other process?
  - $\text{ADP} + \text{P}_i \rightarrow \text{ATP} + \text{H}_2\text{O}$
  - $\text{C}_6\text{H}_{12}\text{O}_6 + 6 \text{O}_2 \rightarrow 6 \text{CO}_2 + 6 \text{H}_2\text{O}$
  - $6 \text{CO}_2 + 6 \text{H}_2\text{O} \rightarrow \text{C}_6\text{H}_{12}\text{O}_6 + 6 \text{O}_2$
  - amino acids  $\rightarrow$  protein
  - glucose + fructose  $\rightarrow$  sucrose
- If an enzyme in solution is saturated with substrate, the most effective way to obtain a faster yield of products is to
  - add more of the enzyme.
  - heat the solution to 90°C.
  - add more substrate.
  - add an allosteric inhibitor.
  - add a noncompetitive inhibitor.
- Some bacteria are metabolically active in hot springs because
  - they are able to maintain a lower internal temperature.
  - high temperatures make catalysis unnecessary.
  - their enzymes have high optimal temperatures.
  - their enzymes are completely insensitive to temperature.
  - they use molecules other than proteins or RNAs as their main catalysts.

### LEVEL 2: APPLICATION/ANALYSIS

- If an enzyme is added to a solution where its substrate and product are in equilibrium, what will occur?
  - Additional product will be formed.
  - Additional substrate will be formed.
  - The reaction will change from endergonic to exergonic.
  - The free energy of the system will change.
  - Nothing; the reaction will stay at equilibrium.

### LEVEL 3: SYNTHESIS/EVALUATION

- DRAW IT** Using a series of arrows, draw the branched metabolic reaction pathway described by the following statements, and then answer the question at the end. Use red arrows and minus signs to indicate inhibition.

L can form either M or N.  
M can form O.  
O can form either P or R.  
P can form Q.  
R can form S.  
O inhibits the reaction of L to form M.  
Q inhibits the reaction of O to form P.  
S inhibits the reaction of O to form R.

Which reaction would prevail if both Q and S were present in the cell in high concentrations?
  - $\text{L} \rightarrow \text{M}$
  - $\text{M} \rightarrow \text{O}$
  - $\text{L} \rightarrow \text{N}$
  - $\text{O} \rightarrow \text{P}$
  - $\text{R} \rightarrow \text{S}$

### 8. EVOLUTION CONNECTION

A recent revival of the antievolutionary “intelligent design” argument holds that biochemical pathways are too complex to have evolved, because all intermediate steps in a given pathway must be present to produce the final product. Critique this argument. How could you use the diversity of metabolic pathways that produce the same or similar products to support your case?

### 9. SCIENTIFIC INQUIRY

**DRAW IT** A researcher has developed an assay to measure the activity of an important enzyme present in liver cells growing in culture. She adds the enzyme’s substrate to a dish of cells and then measures the appearance of reaction products. The results are graphed as the amount of product on the y-axis versus time on the x-axis. The researcher notes four sections of the graph. For a short period of time, no products appear (section A). Then (section B) the reaction rate is quite high (the slope of the line is steep). Next, the reaction gradually slows down (section C). Finally, the graph line becomes flat (section D). Draw and label the graph, and propose a model to explain the molecular events occurring at each stage of this reaction profile.

### 10. SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND SOCIETY

Organophosphates (organic compounds containing phosphate groups) are commonly used as insecticides to improve crop yield. Organophosphates typically interfere with nerve signal transmission by inhibiting the enzymes that degrade transmitter molecules. They affect humans and other vertebrates as well as insects. Thus, the use of organophosphate pesticides poses some health risks. On the other hand, these molecules break down rapidly upon exposure to air and sunlight. As a consumer, what level of risk are you willing to accept in exchange for an abundant and affordable food supply?

### 11. WRITE ABOUT A THEME

**Energy Transfer** Life requires energy. In a short essay (100–150 words), describe the basic principles of bioenergetics in an animal cell. How is the flow and transformation of energy different in a photosynthesizing cell? Include the role of ATP and enzymes in your discussion.

For selected answers, see Appendix A.

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