Phagocytes and Granulocytes

Phagocytes are large white cells that can engulf and digest foreign invaders.

They include monocytes, which circulate in the blood, and macrophages, which are found in tissues throughout the body, as well as neutrophils, cells that circulate in the blood but move into tissues where they are needed. Macrophages are versatile cells; they act as scavengers, they secrete a wide variety of powerful chemicals, and they play an essential role in activating T cells.

Neutrophils are not only phagocytes but also granulocytes: they contain granules filled with potent chemicals. These chemicals, in addition to destroying microorganisms, play a key role in acute inflammatory reactions. Other types of granulocytes are eosinophils and basophils. Mast cells are granule-containing cells in tissue.
Phagocytes and Granulocytes

Phagocytes in the Body

Specialized phagocytes are found in organs throughout the body.