

## Autophagy: Chapter 3. Molecular Mechanisms Underlying the Role of Autophagy in Neurodegenerative Diseases

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Autophagy is a highly regulated process that promotes vital cellular homeostasis by allowing bulk nonspecific degradation of the cytoplasmic contents, mainly damaged and/or surplus organelles and proteins. Autophagy is ubiquitous in eukaryotes, highly conserved from yeast to mammals, and occurs in all mammalian tissues. Historically, autophagy was characterized as the coping response to limited energy resources (starvation), to generate additional biomolecular raw materials. However, research in the past two decades has demonstrated the indispensible roles of autophagy in eukaryotic physiology and pathology with respect to wide-ranging processes such as development, differentiation, aging, immunity, cancer biology, and neurodegenerative disorders. In this chapter, we will provide an overview of the types of autophagy and mechanisms of the autophagy pathway followed by a discussion of the current understanding of the role of autophagy in neuronal physiology, pathology of neurodegenerative disorders, and potential therapeutic approaches.

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