

## SECTION 1-4

## SECTION SUMMARY

## The Cell in Its Environment

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Guide for Reading

- ◆ By what three methods do materials move into and out of cells?
- ◆ What is the difference between passive transport and active transport?

The cell membrane is **selectively permeable**, which means that some substances can pass through it while others cannot. The cell membrane is usually permeable to substances such as oxygen, water, and carbon dioxide. On the other hand, the cell membrane is usually not permeable to some large molecules and salts. **Substances that can move into and out of a cell do so by one of three methods: diffusion, osmosis, or active transport.**

The main method by which small molecules move into and out of cells is diffusion. **Diffusion** is the process by which molecules tend to move from an area of higher concentration to an area of lower concentration. The concentration of a substance is the amount of the substance in a given volume. Diffusion is caused by molecules moving and colliding. The collisions cause the molecules to push away from one another and spread out. Molecules diffuse through the cell membrane into a cell when there is a higher concentration of the molecules outside the cell than inside the cell.

The diffusion of water molecules through a selectively permeable membrane is called **osmosis**. Osmosis is important to cells because cells cannot function properly without adequate water. In osmosis, water molecules move from an area where they are highly concentrated through the cell membrane to an area where they are less concentrated.

The movement of materials through a cell membrane without using energy is called **passive transport**. Diffusion and osmosis are both types of passive transport. When a cell needs to take in materials that are in higher concentration inside the cell than outside the cell, the movement of the materials requires energy. **Active transport** is the movement of materials through a cell membrane using energy. **The main difference between passive transport and active transport is that active transport requires the cell to use energy while passive transport does not.** A cell has several ways of moving materials by active transport. In one method, transport proteins in the cell membrane “pick up” molecules outside the cell and carry them in, using energy in the process. Another method of active transport is engulfing, in which the cell membrane surrounds, or engulfs, a particle. The cell must use energy in this process as well.

Most cells are very small. One reason is related to the fact that all materials move into and out of cells through the cell membrane. Once a molecule enters a cell, it is carried to its destination by a stream of moving cytoplasm. In a very large cell, streams of cytoplasm must travel farther to carry materials from the cell membrane to all parts of the cell. When a cell reaches a certain size, it divides into two new cells.