

RESEARCH ARTICLE SUMMARY

IMMUNOLOGY

Serum amyloid A delivers retinol to intestinal myeloid cells to promote adaptive immunity

Ye-Ji Bang, Zehan Hu, Yun Li, Sureka Gattu, Kelly A. Ruhn, Prithvi Raj, Joachim Herz, Lora V. Hooper*

INTRODUCTION: Vitamin A is a lipid-soluble nutrient that is absorbed from the diet by intestinal epithelial cells and converted to retinol. This product of vitamin A metabolism is essential for intestinal adaptive immunity because it directs the development of B and T cells and promotes their recruitment to the intestine. Consequently, vitamin A deficiency confers increased susceptibility to infectious diseases of the intestine.

Intestinal myeloid cells play a central role in the development of vitamin A–dependent intestinal immunity. Certain myeloid cells convert retinol to retinoic acid (RA) and then pass the RA to developing B and T cells. This activates RA-dependent gene expression programs that direct B and T cells to home to the intestine and induces immunoglobulin A (IgA) production by B cells.

RATIONALE: A major unanswered question is how intestinal myeloid cells acquire retinol for

conversion to RA. Retinol is lipophilic, necessitating transport by retinol-binding proteins that shield it from the aqueous environment. However, proteins that deliver retinol to myeloid cells remain unidentified.

Serum amyloid A (SAA) proteins are retinol-binding proteins expressed in the intestinal epithelium. Epithelial cell expression of SAAs requires both the intestinal microbiota and dietary vitamin A. SAAs are also produced by the liver and circulate in the serum with bound retinol after systemic bacterial infection. However, the cellular targets of SAA-retinol complexes are unclear. In this study, we identified a receptor for SAA-retinol complexes that mediates retinol uptake into intestinal myeloid cells. Moreover, we determined how this retinol uptake mechanism affects vitamin A–dependent immunity.

RESULTS: Using biochemical approaches, including chemical cross-linking and mass spectrometry, we identified low-density lipoprotein (LDL) receptor–related protein 1 (LRP1) as a cell surface receptor for SAAs that binds SAA-retinol complexes with high affinity. We showed that LRP1 mediates cell surface binding and the endocytosis of SAA-retinol complexes in cultured cells. In the intestine, the highest levels of LRP1 expression were on CD11c⁺ myeloid cells, which efficiently bound SAA-retinol complexes, thereby internalizing retinol. The physiological roles of SAAs and their LRP1 receptor were identified *in vivo* using two mouse models: *Saa*^{−/−} mice with a deletion of the entire *Saa* gene locus and *Lrp1*^{ΔCD11c} mice with a myeloid cell–specific deletion of the *Lrp1* gene. Studies of these mice revealed that SAAs and their LRP1 receptor facilitated retinol uptake by intestinal myeloid cells *in vivo* and promoted the expression of enzymes that convert retinol to RA. Accordingly, SAAs and myeloid cell LRP1 were required for the development of vitamin A–dependent adaptive immunity, including B and T cell homing to the intestine and IgA production. Finally, we found that SAAs and LRP1 promoted immunity to enteric infection after immunization.

CONCLUSION: We have identified SAAs as retinol-binding proteins that deliver retinol to RA-producing intestinal myeloid cells. SAA-retinol complexes bind to LRP1 on the myeloid cell surface and are endocytosed, providing retinol for the enzymatic generation of RA. Consequently, SAAs and LRP1 promote the development of vitamin A–dependent adaptive immunity in the intestine and enhance resistance to enteric infection after immunization.

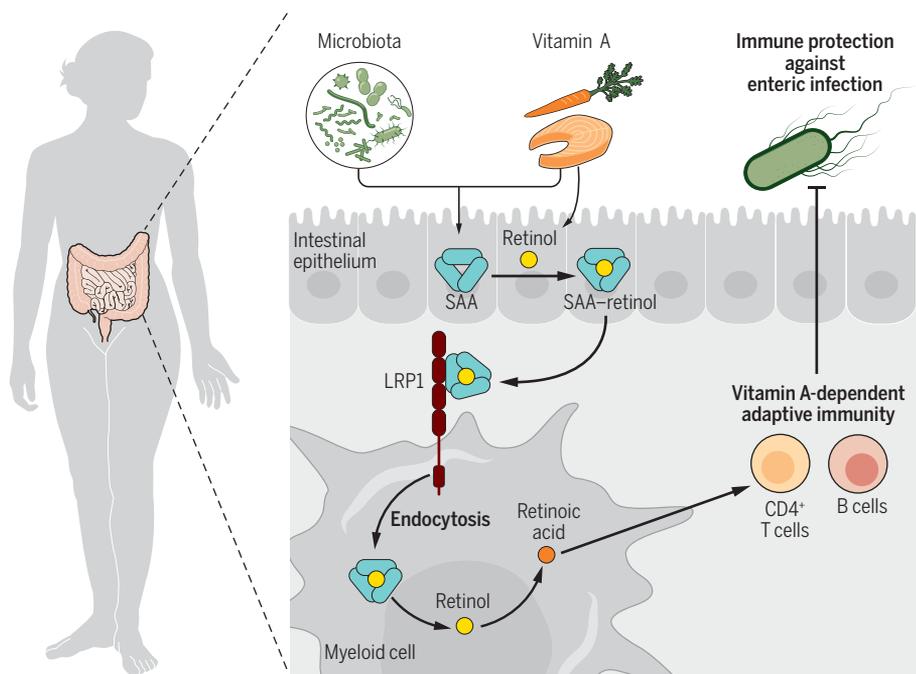
Our findings identify a mechanism by which retinol is acquired by intestinal myeloid cells and show that this mechanism promotes vitamin A–dependent intestinal adaptive immunity. Because expression of SAAs by intestinal epithelial cells requires the microbiota, our findings suggest that the microbiota promotes the development of adaptive immunity in part by regulating epithelial SAA expression. These findings also suggest that SAAs could deliver retinol to myeloid cells that reside in other tissues. By illuminating how vitamin A is mobilized to the intestinal immune system, our results may offer additional approaches for enhancing resistance to infection and for increasing the efficacy of mucosal vaccines, which depend on adequate dietary vitamin A. ■

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SAA proteins deliver retinol to intestinal myeloid cells through LRP1 to promote adaptive immunity. SAAs are retinol-binding proteins induced in intestinal epithelial cells by the microbiota and vitamin A. SAAs deliver retinol to retinoic acid–producing myeloid cells by binding to the endocytic receptor LRP1. LRP1 and SAAs promote development of vitamin A–dependent adaptive immunity in the intestine and enhance resistance to enteric infection.

RESEARCH ARTICLE

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Serum amyloid A delivers retinol to intestinal myeloid cells to promote adaptive immunity

Ye-Ji Bang¹, Zehan Hu¹, Yun Li¹, Sureka Gattu^{1,†}, Kelly A. Ruhn¹, Prithvi Raj¹, Joachim Herz^{2,3,4,5}, Lora V. Hooper^{1,6*}

Vitamin A and its derivative retinol are essential for the development of intestinal adaptive immunity. Retinoic acid (RA)-producing myeloid cells are central to this process, but how myeloid cells acquire retinol for conversion to RA is unknown. Here, we show that serum amyloid A (SAA) proteins—retinol-binding proteins induced in intestinal epithelial cells by the microbiota—deliver retinol to myeloid cells. We identify low-density lipoprotein (LDL) receptor-related protein 1 (LRP1) as an SAA receptor that endocytoses SAA-retinol complexes and promotes retinol acquisition by RA-producing intestinal myeloid cells. Consequently, SAA and LRP1 are essential for vitamin A-dependent immunity, including B and T cell homing to the intestine and immunoglobulin A production. Our findings identify a key mechanism by which vitamin A promotes intestinal immunity.

Vitamin A is a lipid-soluble nutrient that is absorbed from the diet by intestinal epithelial cells and converted to retinol. Retinol is essential for intestinal adaptive immunity because it directs the development of intestinal B and T cells and promotes their recruitment to the intestine (1, 2). Consequently, vitamin A deficiency confers an increased susceptibility to infectious diseases, including those of the intestine (3).

Myeloid cells are central to the development of vitamin A-dependent intestinal immunity. Myeloid cells include dendritic cells (DCs) and macrophages, which circulate in the intestine and present antigens to naïve B and T cells to promote their differentiation into functional immune cells (4, 5). Certain intestinal DCs and macrophages can enzymatically convert retinol to retinoic acid (RA) (6–10). These myeloid cells pass their RA to T cells, where it complexes with retinoic acid receptors (RARs)—transcription factors that activate RA-dependent gene expression programs (11, 12). These programs include the expression of homing receptors, such as CCR9 and integrin $\alpha 4\beta 7$, which direct T cells to the intestine (1, 13). Similarly, RA-producing myeloid cells imprint homing receptors on developing B cells and induce the production of immunoglobulin A (IgA) (2).

A major unanswered question is how intestinal myeloid cells acquire retinol for conversion to RA. Retinol is lipophilic, necessitating its transport by retinol-binding proteins that shield it from the aqueous environment. However, proteins that deliver retinol to myeloid cells remain unidentified.

Serum amyloid A (SAA) proteins are a family of retinol-binding proteins expressed in the intestinal epithelium and liver (14, 15). SAAs form a trimeric assembly with a central hydrophobic retinol-binding pocket (14, 15). Epithelial expression of SAAs is induced by the intestinal microbiota through a signaling circuit involving DCs, innate lymphoid cells, and epithelial STAT3 (signal transducers and activators of transcription 3) (16), and by dietary vitamin A through epithelial RAR β (17). SAAs are also produced in the liver after acute bacterial infection and circulate in the serum with bound retinol (14, 15). Thus, SAAs are retinol-binding proteins that transport retinol in response to microbial signals, including the microbiota and acute systemic infection. However, the cellular targets of SAA-retinol complexes are unclear.

Here, we identify a molecular basis for retinol acquisition by intestinal myeloid cells. We show that SAAs deliver retinol to RA-producing myeloid cells in the intestine and that low-density lipoprotein (LDL) receptor-related protein 1 (LRP1) mediates myeloid cell uptake of SAA-retinol complexes. Together, LRP1 and SAA facilitate myeloid cell retinol acquisition and are essential for the development of vitamin A-dependent adaptive immunity in the intestine.

Identification of LRP1 as a cell surface receptor for SAA proteins

As a first step in understanding how SAAs deliver retinol to target cells, we identified a cell

surface receptor for SAA. We first screened cultured cell lines for evidence of receptor-mediated cell surface binding of SAAs. We used SAA1 for these studies because *Saa1* expression is highest among the four *Saa* isoforms in the intestine (fig. S1A). Differentiated 3T3-L1 mouse adipocytes, which are a major extrahepatic retinol storage site (18), bound SAA1 on their cell surface (fig. S1, B and C). Furthermore, the binding was saturable (fig. S1D), which suggests a specific receptor-mediated interaction. Finally, adipocytes acquired retinol more readily from SAA1-retinol complexes than from free retinol (fig. S1E), which suggests that SAAs deliver retinol to receptor-bearing target cells.

To identify the adipocyte SAA receptor or receptors, we used the 6X histidine tag (His-tag)-nickel resin system and a bifunctional cross-linker, allowing stabilization of the SAA-receptor interaction and purification of the complex (Fig. 1A). Recombinant His-tagged SAA1 was conjugated with the cross-linker, complexed with retinol, and added to adipocytes. After ultraviolet cross-linking, membrane solubilization, and nickel resin purification, we identified a >250-kD covalent protein complex that contained SAA1 (Fig. 1B). Mass spectrometry identified the other major protein as the transmembrane receptor LRP1 (table S1).

LRP1 is a member of the LDL receptor family that binds several distinct ligands, including lipoproteins, and facilitates their cellular uptake through endocytosis (19). It is composed of two noncovalently associated fragments: a long N-terminal extracellular α -fragment containing ligand-binding regions and a short membrane-anchored C-terminal β -fragment (Fig. 1C). To test whether LRP1 directly binds to SAA1, we expressed and purified the full-length ectodomain of human LRP1 (LRP1-ECD). SAA1 and LRP1-ECD eluted together during size exclusion chromatography (Fig. 1D), indicating a direct interaction. We confirmed binding by microscale thermophoresis using a fluorescently labeled SAA1 and LRP1-ECD. We observed LRP1-dependent enhancement of SAA1 fluorescence and calculated a dissociation constant (K_d) of ~33 nM (Fig. 1E). This K_d is consistent with those of other known LRP1 ligands (20, 21) and indicates high-affinity binding of SAA1 to LRP1.

We next determined which LRP1 domains bind to SAA1. The ectodomain of LRP1 encompasses four ligand-binding clusters containing cysteine-rich repeats, CI to CIV (Fig. 1C). Among these, CII, CIII, and CIV directly bind ligands (19). We therefore tested SAA1 binding to these three clusters. Pull-down assays revealed that SAA1 preferentially bound to LRP1-CIV (Fig. 1, F and G). We then confirmed that mouse SAA3 also binds to LRP1-CIV (fig. S2). Thus, LRP1 directly binds SAAs with high affinity.

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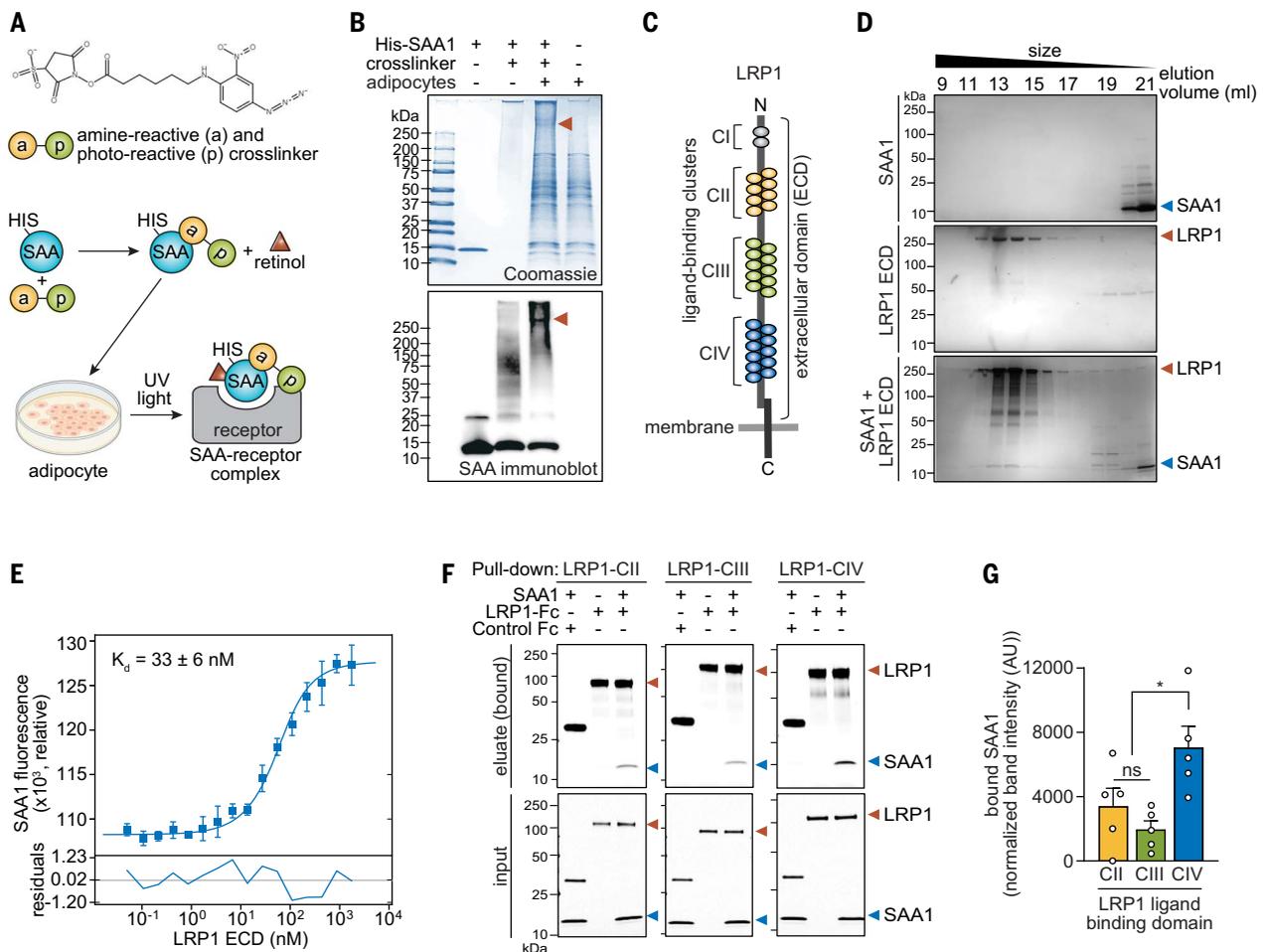


Fig. 1. LRP1 is a cell surface receptor for SAAs. (A) Schematic diagram of the strategy used to identify the SAA receptor. The structure of the amine-reactive and photoreactive cross-linker is shown at the top. The SAA-receptor complex was conjugated by the cross-linker as shown in the diagram and then purified and further analyzed. The cell culture image was generated in BioRender. (B) Protein complexes were resolved by SDS-PAGE and detected with Coomassie blue (top) or immunoblot for SAA (bottom). Red arrowheads indicate the protein complex that was subjected to mass spectrometry for receptor identification. (C) Schematic of the domain organization of LRP1 showing the ectodomain (ECD) and ligand-binding clusters (CI to CIV). (D) Formation of a complex between SAA1 and the LRP1 ectodomain (LRP1-ECD) was confirmed by size exclusion chromatography. Proteins were resolved by SDS-PAGE and detected with Coomassie blue. (E) Binding affinity between SAA1 and the LRP1-ECD was

determined using microscale thermophoresis. Specific LRP1-dependent enhancement of fluorescence of SAA1 was used for the determination of a dissociation constant (K_d). Residuals between the fit and the data are depicted in the bottom panel. Data represent means \pm SEMs from three independent assays. (F and G) Binding of SAA1 to the LRP1 ligand-binding clusters (LRP1-CII, LRP1-CIII, and LRP1-CIV) was assessed by pull-down assay. Each Fc-tagged LRP1 protein and Fc control was incubated with SAA1, and Protein G magnetic beads were used to capture the Fc-tagged proteins (top). (G) Bound SAA1 in (F) was quantified by scanning densitometry and normalized to SAA1 bound to control Fc. Results from five independent sets of pull-down assays are shown, with each data point representing one assay. In all experiments, SAA1 was preincubated with retinol (3:1, retinol:SAA1 molar ratio) at 4°C for 2 hours to allow SAA1-retinol complex formation. * $P < 0.05$; paired Student's t test.

LRP1 mediates cell surface binding and cellular uptake of SAA1-retinol complexes

To determine whether LRP1 functions as a SAA receptor that promotes cellular retinol uptake, we examined wild-type (*Lrp1*^{+/+}) and *Lrp1*-deficient (*Lrp1*^{-/-}) fibroblasts. We first assessed whether SAA binding to the cell surface was LRP1 dependent. His-SAA1-retinol complexes were incubated with *Lrp1*^{+/+} and *Lrp1*^{-/-} cell cultures at 4°C to allow the binding of SAA1 to the cell surface while preventing endocytosis (22). SAA1 binding was then measured by flow cytometry. More SAA1 bound to *Lrp1*^{+/+} cells than to *Lrp1*^{-/-} cells

(Fig. 2, A and B), indicating that LRP1 mediates cell surface binding of SAA1. LRP1-dependent binding of SAA1 to the cell surface was saturable (Fig. 2C) and could be blocked by SAA1 that lacked a His tag (Fig. 2D), which provides evidence for a specific binding interaction. Finally, receptor-associated protein (RAP), a chaperone that binds to LRP1 in the endoplasmic reticulum (23, 24), competed for cell surface binding by SAA1 (Fig. 2E), providing further evidence of specificity. LRP1 is therefore a specific receptor for SAA1.

Next, we tested whether LRP1 facilitates the delivery of SAA-bound retinol into cells. We

added a ³H-retinol tracer to fibroblasts, either as free retinol or in complex with SAA1, and measured the cell-associated retinol by scintillation counting. More retinol was acquired by *Lrp1*^{+/+} cells from SAA1-retinol complexes than from free retinol. Furthermore, retinol uptake from SAA1-retinol complexes was reduced in *Lrp1*^{-/-} cells (Fig. 2F). The addition of RAP as a competitive inhibitor of SAA1 binding to LRP1 reduced retinol uptake by *Lrp1*^{+/+} cells (Fig. 2G). Therefore, LRP1 facilitates retinol uptake by binding to SAA1-retinol complexes.

LRP1 internalizes many of its known ligands by endocytosis (19, 25), suggesting that it may

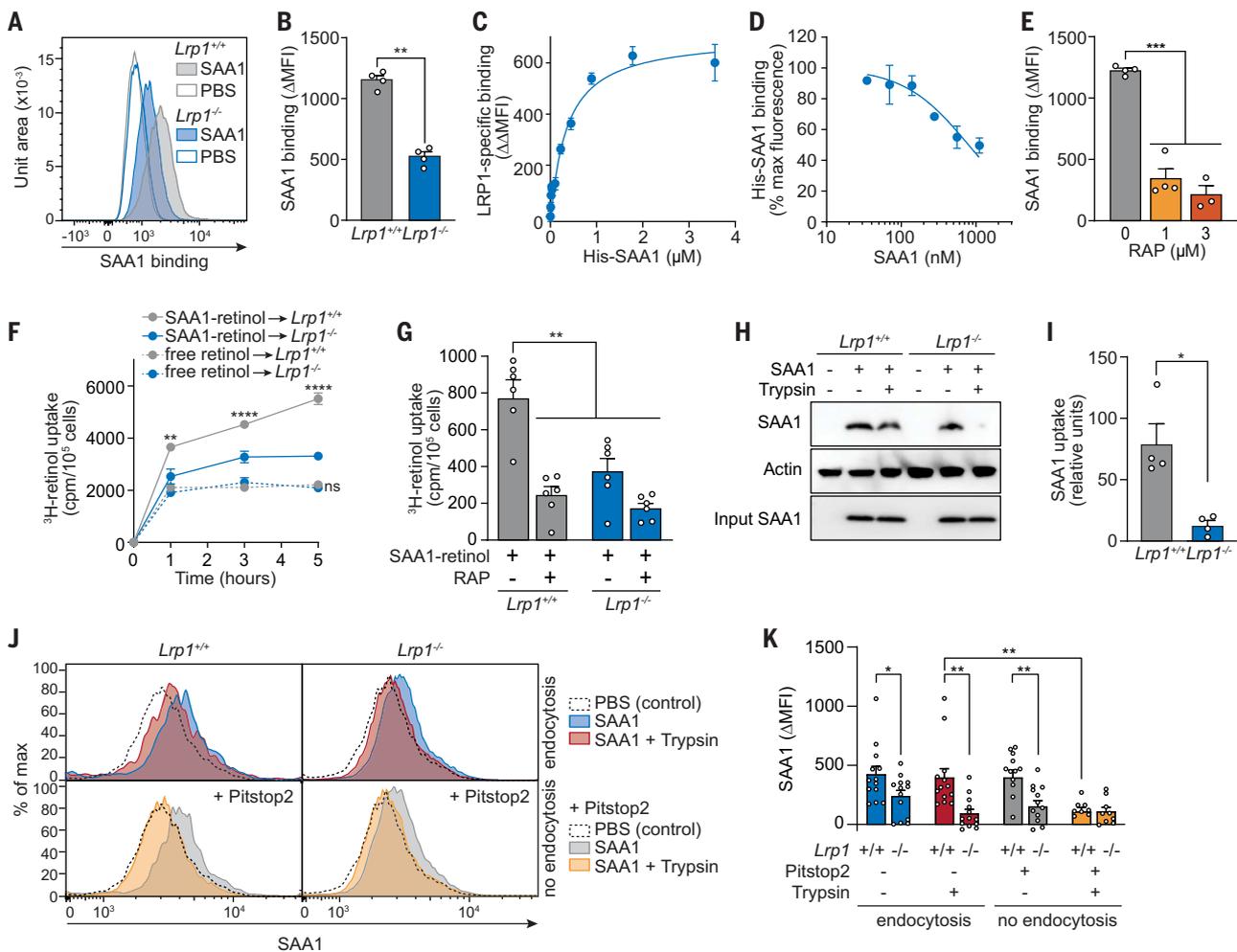


Fig. 2. LRP1 mediates cell surface binding and cellular uptake of SAA1-retinol complexes. (A to E) Wild-type ($Lrp1^{+/+}$) and $Lrp1$ -deficient ($Lrp1^{-/-}$) fibroblasts were incubated with His-SAA1-retinol complexes at 4°C, and the binding of SAA to the cell surface was analyzed by flow cytometry under nonpermeabilizing staining conditions using PE-conjugated anti-His tag antibody. (A and B) His-SAA1 (1.8 μ M) was added to the cells, and representative flow cytometry histograms are shown in (A). Δ MFI (MFI^{SAA}–MFI^{PBS}) representing SAA1 binding to the cell surface (B) was calculated ($n = 4$ replicates per condition). PBS was added instead of SAA1 in control samples. (C) LRP1-specific SAA1 binding to the fibroblast cell surface was calculated and indicates saturable binding. LRP1-specific binding was calculated as the difference of SAA binding (Δ MFI) to $Lrp1^{+/+}$ and $Lrp1^{-/-}$ fibroblasts ($\Delta\Delta$ MFI = Δ MFI ^{$Lrp1^{+/+}$} – Δ MFI ^{$Lrp1^{-/-}$}) ($n = 4$). (D) Competitive binding assays were conducted by adding increasing concentrations of non-His-tagged SAA1 together with His-SAA1 (1.8 μ M) to the cells. LRP1-specific binding of His-SAA1 to the cell surface was calculated ($\Delta\Delta$ MFI) and is shown as a percentage of the maximum fluorescence ($n = 3$). (E) Receptor-associated protein (RAP) was added to wild-type fibroblasts together with His-SAA1 (1 μ M). Binding of SAA1 to the cell surface was measured by flow cytometry and is shown as Δ MFI (MFI^{SAA}–MFI^{PBS}). (F and G) Cellular ³H-retinol uptake was measured. (F) ³H-retinol was added to the cells either as free retinol or in complex

with SAA1. After incubation at 37°C, the counts per minute (cpm) in the cell pellets were determined and normalized to cell number ($n \geq 5$). (G) RAP (3 μ M) was added to cells together with 0.6 μ M SAA1-³H-retinol complex for competition analyses. (H to K) Cellular SAA uptake was analyzed. Cells were incubated with His-SAA1-retinol complex at 37°C for 30 min and subsequently treated with trypsin for 3 min to remove surface-bound SAA1. (H and I) Cells were lysed and cellular SAA uptake was analyzed by immunoblotting using an anti-His antibody (H). SAA band intensity in the cell lysates after trypsin digestion was measured, normalized with loading controls, and is shown in relative units in (I). (J and K) LRP1 promotes SAA1 endocytosis. SAA associated with $Lrp1^{+/+}$ and $Lrp1^{-/-}$ fibroblasts was measured by flow cytometry. Representative histograms are shown in (J) and Δ MFI (MFI^{SAA}–MFI^{PBS}) representing SAA1 measurements from three independent experiments are shown (K). Cells were treated with trypsin to remove surface-bound SAA1, and Pitstop2 was added to block endocytosis. In all experiments, SAA1 was preincubated with retinol or ³H-retinol (3:1, retinol:SAA1 molar ratio) at 4°C for at least 2 hours to allow SAA-retinol complex formation. Means \pm SEMs are shown from one [(A) to (E)] and at least two independent experiments [(F) to (K)]. All results are representative of at least two independent experiments. * $P < 0.05$; ** $P < 0.01$; *** $P < 0.001$; **** $P < 0.0001$; Student's t test.

facilitate retinol uptake through endocytosis of the SAA1-retinol complex. To test this idea, we asked whether cell-associated SAA1 is degraded by added trypsin, which can digest cell surface but not internalized proteins (15). We added His-tagged SAA1-retinol complexes

to $Lrp1^{+/+}$ and $Lrp1^{-/-}$ fibroblasts at 4°C to allow cell surface binding, incubated at 37°C to initiate endocytosis, and then exposed the cells to trypsin. When assessed by immunoblot, SAA1 was mostly protected from trypsin proteolysis when added to $Lrp1^{+/+}$ fibroblasts,

whereas the SAA1 added to $Lrp1^{-/-}$ fibroblasts was mostly digested (Fig. 2, H and I). Similarly, flow cytometry revealed that most of the SAA1 associated with $Lrp1^{+/+}$ fibroblasts was protected from trypsin digestion but became susceptible when the endocytosis inhibitor

Pitstop2 was added to the cells (Fig. 2, J and K). By contrast, SAA1 added to *Lrp1*^{-/-} cells was susceptible to trypsin proteolysis even in the absence of Pitstop2 (Fig. 2, J and K). Thus, LRP1 promotes the endocytosis of SAA1-retinol complexes.

LRP1 is expressed on intestinal CD11c⁺ myeloid cells

We next sought to identify intestinal cells that express LRP1 and therefore might be targets of SAA-retinol complexes. We first compared expression of *Saa1* transcripts with the expression of transcripts encoding retinol-binding protein 4 (RBP4), which delivers retinol from the liver to peripheral tissues under noninflammatory conditions (26). *Rbp4* transcripts were more abundant than *Saa1* transcripts in the liver, whereas *Saa1* transcripts showed greater abundance in the small intestine (Fig. 3A). Likewise, SAA protein levels were higher than RBP4 levels in the small intestine (Fig. 3, B and

C). At the same time, transcripts encoding the SAA receptor LRP1 were more abundant in the small intestine than transcripts encoding two known RBP4 receptors, stimulated by retinoic acid 6 (STRA6) (27) and RBP receptor 2 (RBP2) (28) (Fig. 3D). SAA1 and its receptor LRP1 are more highly expressed in the intestine than RBP4 and its receptors, which suggests that SAAs might play a predominant role in mobilizing retinol in the intestine.

To identify intestinal cells expressing LRP1, we measured LRP1 expression in various intestinal cell populations. *Lrp1* transcripts were less abundant in epithelial cells than in lamina propria cells, which include various immune cells (Fig. 3E). To determine whether LRP1 is expressed on immune cells, we measured LRP1 expression on various lamina propria immune cell populations using flow cytometry (figs. S3 and S4). LRP1 was highest on CD11c⁺MHCII⁺ myeloid cells when compared with other immune cells, including B cells, T cells, and CD11c⁻

monocytes. CD11c⁺MHCII⁺ myeloid cells include F4/80⁺ DCs and F4/80⁺ macrophages, which both expressed LRP1 (Fig. 3, F and G). Immunofluorescence analysis of mouse small intestine confirmed LRP1 expression by intestinal lamina propria CD11c⁺ cells (Fig. 3H and fig. S5). When His-SAA1-retinol complexes were added to lamina propria immune cells, CD11c⁺ myeloid cells bound more SAA relative to other immune cell populations (fig. S6). Thus, CD11c⁺ myeloid cells express LRP1 and capture SAA-retinol complexes.

LRP1 promotes myeloid cell uptake of SAA-bound retinol

Next, we examined whether LRP1 facilitates SAA binding and retinol uptake in CD11c⁺ myeloid cells. We generated mice with a CD11c⁺ myeloid cell-specific deletion of the *Lrp1* gene (*Lrp1*^{ΔCD11c} mice) and investigated bone marrow-derived myeloid cells (BM-MCs). CD11c⁺ cells were isolated by magnetic sorting from cells

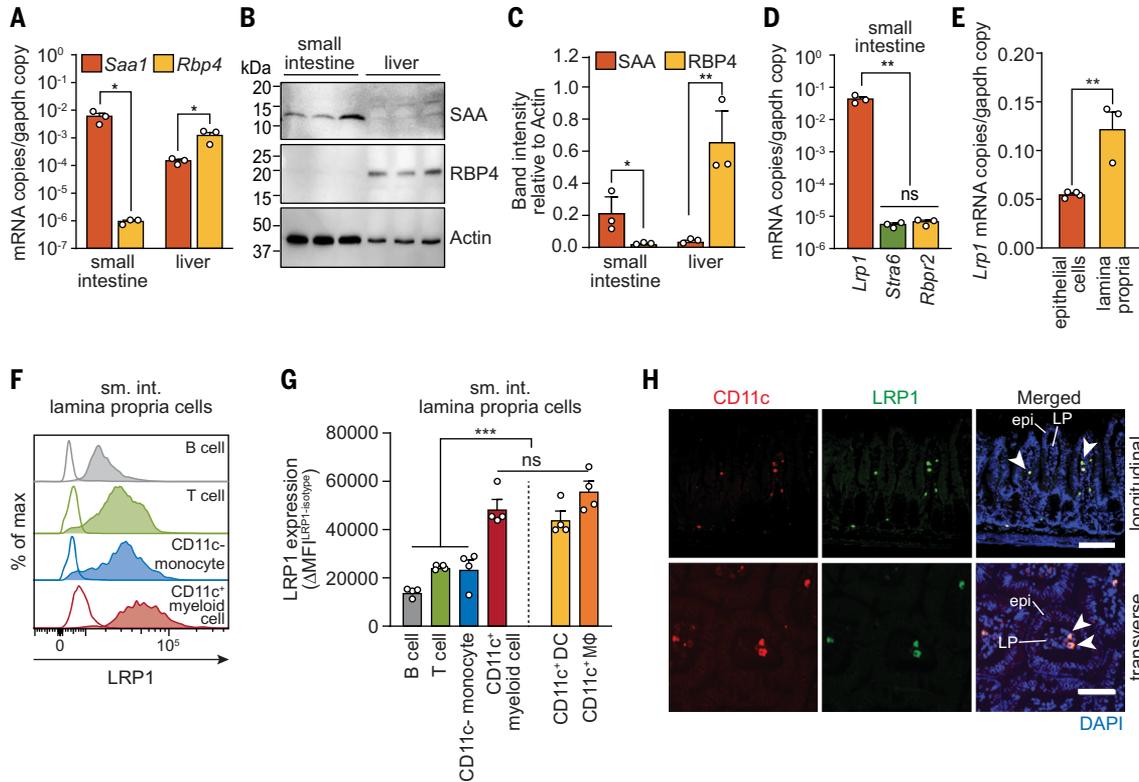


Fig. 3. LRP1 is expressed on intestinal CD11c⁺ myeloid cells. (A) qPCR analysis of *Saa1* and *Rbp4* transcripts in ileum and liver. (B and C) Immunoblotting of SAA, RBP4, and actin (loading control) in mouse ileum and liver. SAA and RBP4 band intensities were measured, normalized to actin, and are shown in relative units in (C). (D) qPCR analysis of *Lrp1*, *Stra6*, and *Rbp2* transcripts in mouse ileum. (E) qPCR analysis of *Lrp1* transcripts in small intestinal epithelial cells and immune cells isolated from the small intestinal lamina propria. (F and G) Flow cytometry analysis of LRP1 expression on B cells, T cells, monocytes, and CD11c⁺ myeloid cells. (F) Representative histograms showing LRP1 expression. Empty histograms are from isotype controls. (G) LRP1 expression (Δ MFI) is shown as the difference in MFI between isotype-matched control and anti-LRP1

antibody staining ($MFI^{LRP1} - MFI^{isotype}$). (H) Immunofluorescence detection of CD11c (red), LRP1 (green), and nuclei (blue) in the mouse small intestine. Longitudinal (top) and transverse (bottom) sections of villi are shown. Examples of LRP1⁺ and CD11c⁺ cells are indicated with arrowheads. Epi, epithelium; LP, lamina propria; DAPI, 4',6-diamidino-2-phenylindole. Scale bars in (H) indicate 100 μ m (top) or 50 μ m (bottom). Detection with isotype control antibody is shown in fig. S5. sm. int., small intestine; M Φ , macrophage. At least three wild-type C57BL/6 mice were analyzed in each experiment. Means \pm SEMs are plotted from one [(A) to (E)] and at least two independent experiments [(F) to (H)]. For qPCR, mRNA copy numbers were calculated from the standard and normalized to *Gapdh* copy numbers. * P < 0.05; ** P < 0.01; *** P < 0.001; ns, not significant; Student's *t* test.

grown in granulocyte-macrophage colony-stimulating factor (GM-CSF), yielding BM-MCs that included both DCs and macrophages (fig. S7, A and B) (29, 30). Bone marrow-derived DCs and macrophages isolated from *Lrp1^{ΔCd11c}* mice showed lowered expression of LRP1 (fig. S7C) and supported less binding of His-SAA1-retinol than BM-MCs from *Lrp1^{fl/fl}* mice (Fig. 4, A and B, and fig. S7, D and E). Likewise, ³H-retinol uptake from SAA1-³H-retinol complexes was lower in BM-MCs from *Lrp1^{ΔCd11c}* mice than in those from *Lrp1^{fl/fl}* mice (Fig. 4C). Furthermore, ³H-retinol uptake in *Lrp1^{fl/fl}* BM-MCs was higher with the ad-

dition of SAA1-³H-retinol than with free ³H-retinol (Fig. 4C). Thus, LRP1 facilitates myeloid cell retinol uptake from SAA1-retinol complexes.

CD11c⁺ myeloid cells convert retinol to RA through a two-step enzymatic oxidation. First, retinol is converted to retinaldehyde by alcohol dehydrogenases (ADHs) or retinol dehydrogenases (RDHs). Next, retinaldehyde is irreversibly converted to RA by members of the aldehyde dehydrogenase family [also known as retinaldehyde dehydrogenases (RALDHs)] (31). RALDH expression in intestinal myeloid cells is induced by vitamin A and RA (32). The

reduced retinol uptake in *Lrp1^{ΔCd11c}* myeloid cells therefore suggested that these cells might show reduced RALDH activity. We assessed RALDH activity by Aldefluor assay, which measures conversion of a fluorescent RALDH substrate by flow cytometry. The addition of SAA1-retinol increased RALDH activity in *Lrp1^{fl/fl}* but not in *Lrp1^{ΔCd11c}* myeloid cells (Fig. 4, D and E). The increase in RALDH activity was higher with SAA1-retinol than with free retinol. This activity was suppressed by the RALDH inhibitor N,N-diethylaminobenzaldehyde (DEAB) (Fig. 4, D and E). Thus, LRP1 facilitates retinol uptake from SAA1-retinol complexes, and this uptake increases RALDH activity in myeloid cells.

SAA1 and LRP1 promote retinol uptake by intestinal CD11c⁺ myeloid cells in vivo

We next examined the role of SAA and LRP1 in retinol acquisition in vivo by small intestinal CD11c⁺ myeloid cells. We previously used CRISPR-Cas9-mediated gene targeting to delete the entire mouse *Saa* locus (encompassing *Saa1* to *Saa4*) (15) and verified that the numbers and composition of CD11c⁺ myeloid cells were not altered in *Saa*^{-/-} mice (fig. S8, A and B). We measured retinol uptake by small intestinal CD11c⁺ myeloid cells by gavaging mice with a ³H-retinol tracer and tracking it to lamina propria myeloid cells. Fifteen hours after gavage, CD11c⁺ cells from *Saa*^{-/-} mice had acquired less ³H-retinol than cells from wild-type mice (Fig. 5A and fig. S9, A and B), which indicates that SAAs promote retinol delivery to intestinal CD11c⁺ cells. Overall ³H-retinol levels were similar in the small intestines of wild-type and *Saa*^{-/-} mice (fig. S10A), which indicates that the lowered retinol uptake by CD11c⁺ cells from *Saa*^{-/-} mice did not arise from a decrease in intestinal retinol absorption. ³H-retinol levels were also similar in lamina propria CD11c⁻ cells from wild-type and *Saa*^{-/-} mice, which demonstrates that SAAs selectively promote retinol uptake in CD11c⁺ cells.

CD11c⁺ cells from *Saa*^{-/-} mice had reduced expression of *Adh4*, *Rdh7*, and *Aldh1a1* (Fig. 5B). These genes encode enzymes that convert retinol to RA (33–35), and their expression is induced by retinol or RA (fig. S10B) (32). By contrast, expression of these genes was similar in CD11c⁻ cells from wild-type and *Saa*^{-/-} mice (fig. S10C), consistent with the idea that SAAs selectively deliver retinol to CD11c⁺ cells. Likewise, RALDH activity was lower in CD11c⁺ myeloid cells from *Saa*^{-/-} mice than in those from wild-type mice (Fig. 5, C and D). Thus, SAAs facilitate myeloid cell retinol uptake that promotes the expression of enzymes that convert retinol to RA.

Next, we compared *Lrp1^{fl/fl}* and *Lrp1^{ΔCd11c}* mice to determine whether LRP1 also facilitates retinol uptake by intestinal CD11c⁺ myeloid

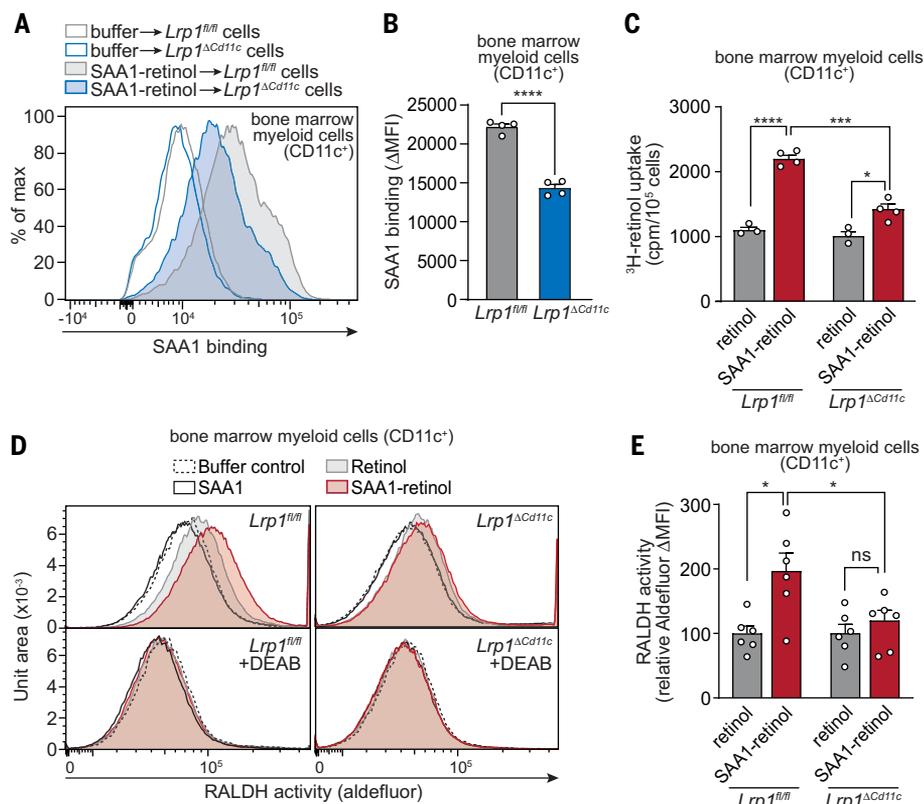
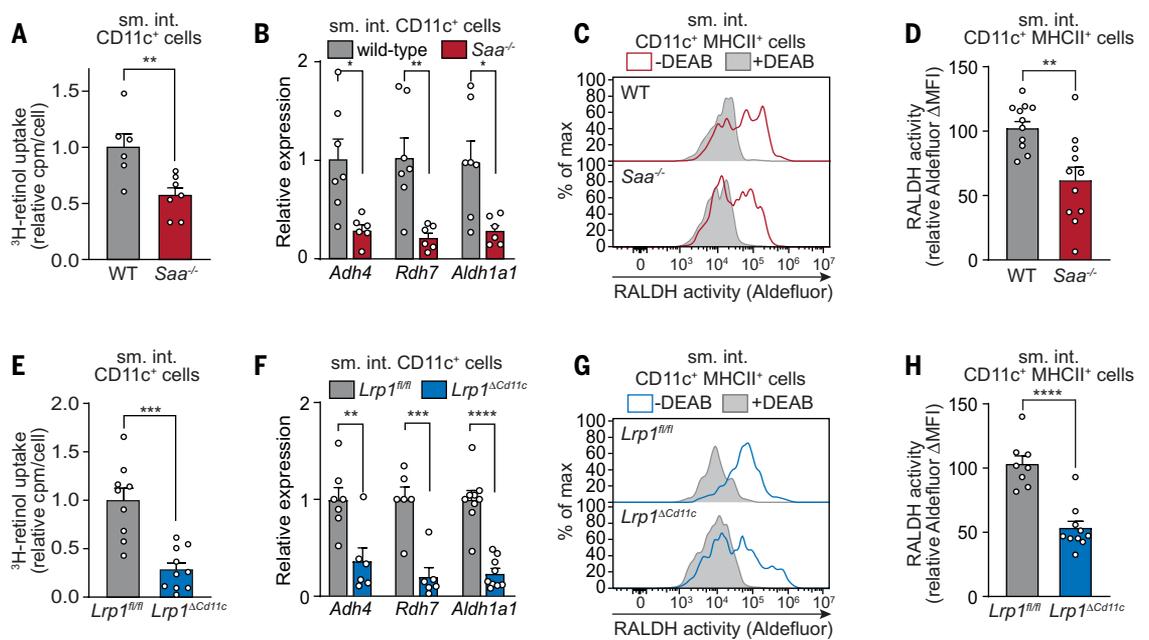


Fig. 4. LRP1 promotes myeloid cell uptake of SAA-bound retinol. CD11c⁺ myeloid cells were isolated from bone marrow myeloid cells that were acquired from *Lrp1^{fl/fl}* and *Lrp1^{ΔCd11c}* mice and grown in GM-CSF. The CD11c⁺ myeloid cells were used to measure SAA binding [(A) and (B)]. ³H-retinol uptake (C), and retinaldehyde dehydrogenase (RALDH) activity [(D) and (E)]. (A and B) Binding of SAA to CD11c⁺ bone marrow myeloid cells was analyzed by flow cytometry under nonpermeabilizing staining conditions. A total of 1.5×10^5 cells were incubated with $1.8 \mu\text{M}$ His-SAA1-retinol complex for 1 hour at 4°C. For controls, PBS was added instead of SAA1. (A) Representative histograms are shown with empty lines representing the controls. (B) SAA binding was determined as SAA ΔMFI ($\text{MFI}^{\text{SAA}} - \text{MFI}^{\text{control}}$) and normalized to *Lrp1^{fl/fl}* set at 100. (C) ³H-retinol (200 nM) was added to the cells either as free retinol or in complex with SAA1. After a 2-hour incubation at 37°C, the counts per minute (cpm) in the cell pellets were determined and normalized to cell number, and *Lrp1^{fl/fl}* were set at 100. (D and E) Measurement of cellular RALDH activity. Cells were incubated with SAA1-retinol complexes, retinol only, SAA1 only, or buffer (control) for 1 hour at 4°C. After washing and incubation for 1.5 hours at 37°C, the cells were analyzed by Aldefluor assay. The aldehyde dehydrogenase inhibitor DEAB was added to each sample as a control. (D) Representative histograms showing Aldefluor fluorescence. (E) To measure RALDH activity, the MFI of the DEAB treatment control was first subtracted from the Aldefluor MFI of each sample ($\Delta\text{MFI} = \text{MFI}^{\text{sample}} - \text{MFI}^{\text{control}}$) and then converted to relative values with the ΔMFI for the buffer control set at 0 and the retinol-only ΔMFI set at 100. Means \pm SEMs are plotted from one [(A) to (C)] and two [(D) and (E)] independent experiments. All results are representative of at least two independent experiments. * $P < 0.05$; *** $P < 0.001$; **** $P < 0.0001$; ns, not significant; Student's *t* test.

Fig. 5. SAA and LRP1 promote retinol uptake by intestinal CD11c⁺ myeloid cells in vivo.

Wild-type (WT) and *Saa*^{-/-} mice [(A) to (D)] or *Lrp1*^{fl/fl} and *Lrp1*^{ΔCd11c} [(E) to (H)] mice were analyzed. (A and E) Mice were gavaged with ³H-retinol and CD11c⁺ cells were isolated from the small intestinal (sm. int.) lamina propria. Counts per minute (cpm) were determined and normalized to cell number, and wild-type (A) and *Lrp1*^{fl/fl} (E) were set at 1. (B and F) qPCR analysis of transcripts encoding proteins involved in conversion of retinol to RA in small intestinal lamina propria CD11c⁺ cells. Transcript abundances were

normalized to *Gapdh* transcript abundance and expressed relative to wild-type (B) and *Lrp1*^{fl/fl} mice (F). (C and G) Retinaldehyde dehydrogenase (RALDH) activity of CD11c⁺MHCII⁺ myeloid cells (live CD45⁺CD11c⁺MHCII⁺CD3⁻B220⁻) was assessed by Aldefluor assay. Representative histograms showing Aldefluor fluorescence are shown. Filled gray histograms are from controls incubated with the ALDH inhibitor DEAB, and empty lines show samples without DEAB. (D and H) RALDH activity was measured as Aldefluor ΔMFI (MFI^{sample} - MFI^{control}). Means ± SEMs from at least three independent experiments with *n* ≥ 5 mice per group are plotted. **P* < 0.05; ***P* < 0.01; ****P* < 0.001; *****P* < 0.0001; Student's *t* test.



cells. We first verified that the numbers and composition of CD11c⁺ myeloid cells did not differ between *Lrp1*^{fl/fl} and *Lrp1*^{ΔCd11c} mice (fig. S11, A and B). As expected, *Lrp1* transcripts and protein were less abundant in small intestinal CD11c⁺ cells from *Lrp1*^{ΔCd11c} mice than in those from *Lrp1*^{fl/fl} mice while remaining similar in CD11c⁻ cells (fig. S12, A and B). After ³H-retinol gavage, CD11c⁺ cells from *Lrp1*^{ΔCd11c} mice acquired less ³H-retinol than cells from *Lrp1*^{fl/fl} mice (Fig. 5E), which indicates that LRP1 facilitates retinol uptake by intestinal CD11c⁺ cells. Consistent with our findings in wild-type and *Saa*^{-/-} mice (fig. S10A), ³H-retinol levels in lamina propria CD11c⁻ cells from *Lrp1*^{fl/fl} and *Lrp1*^{ΔCd11c} mice were similar (fig. S13A), demonstrating that LRP1 selectively promotes retinol uptake in CD11c⁺ cells. Finally, in agreement with our findings in *Saa*^{-/-} mice, CD11c⁺ cells from *Lrp1*^{ΔCd11c} mice showed reduced expression of *Adh4*, *Rdh7*, and *Aldh1a1* (Fig. 5F and fig. S13B) and lower RALDH activity as compared with *Lrp1*^{fl/fl} mice (Fig. 5, G and H). Thus, SAAs and their LRP1 receptor promote retinol uptake by CD11c⁺ myeloid cells and increase the expression of enzymes that convert retinol to RA.

SAA and LRP1 promote vitamin A-dependent adaptive immunity in the intestine

We next assessed whether SAA and LRP1 promote vitamin A-dependent adaptive immunity in the intestine. RA-producing myeloid

cells induce expression of the gut-homing receptor CC-chemokine receptor 9 (CCR9) on B cells and CD4⁺ T cells in mesenteric lymph nodes (mLNs) and gut-associated lymphoid tissue, which directs the lymphocytes to the intestine (1, 2, 13). Consistent with the reduced retinol uptake in their RA-producing myeloid cells, the small intestines of *Saa*^{-/-} mice had reduced frequencies of CD4⁺ T cells imprinted with CCR9 (Fig. 6, A and B), reduced numbers of CCR9⁺CD4⁺ T cells (Fig. 6B), and reduced overall numbers of CD4⁺ T cells (Fig. 6C) relative to wild-type mice. CCR9⁺ B cell frequencies (Fig. 6, D and E) and numbers (Fig. 6E) as well as overall B cell numbers (Fig. 6F) were also reduced in the small intestines of *Saa*^{-/-} mice. RA also promotes the development of FOXP3⁺ regulatory T cells (T_{regs}) (6, 9, 12). However, T_{reg} frequencies among CD4⁺ T cells were similar when comparing the small intestines (fig. S14, A and B) and mLNs (fig. S14, C and D) of wild-type and *Saa*^{-/-} mice. SAAs therefore regulate B cell and CD4⁺ T cell homing to the intestine but do not appear to be required for the generation of intestinal T_{regs}.

Lrp1^{ΔCd11c} mice were similar to *Saa*^{-/-} mice, with reduced frequencies and numbers of CCR9⁺CD4⁺ T cells (Fig. 6, J and K) and reduced total numbers of CD4⁺ T cells (Fig. 6L) in the small intestine. *Lrp1*^{ΔCd11c} mice had decreased frequencies and numbers of CCR9⁺ B cells (Fig. 6, M and N) and decreased total numbers of B cells (Fig. 6O) in the small in-

testine. T_{reg} frequencies among CD4⁺ T cells were also similar in the small intestines (fig. S15, A and B) and mLNs (fig. S15, C and D) of *Lrp1*^{fl/fl} and *Lrp1*^{ΔCd11c} mice. Thus, LRP1 also regulates B cell and CD4⁺ T cell homing to the intestine but is not required for the generation of intestinal T_{regs}.

T helper 17 (T_H17) cells are specialized CD4⁺ T cells that secrete a distinct set of cytokines, including interleukin-17 (IL-17). Although SAAs are not required for T_H17 cell lineage commitment, they boost T_H17 cell effector function by stimulating IL-17A production (16). Accordingly, T_H17 cell frequencies among CD4⁺ T cells were similar in the small intestines (fig. S14, A and B) and mLNs (fig. S14, C and D) of wild-type and *Saa*^{-/-} mice, but IL-17A production was reduced in T_H17 cells from *Saa*^{-/-} mice (fig. S14, E and F). Similarly, T_H17 cell frequencies were similar in *Lrp1*^{fl/fl} and *Lrp1*^{ΔCd11c} mice (fig. S15, A to D), but IL-17A production was reduced in T_H17 cells from *Lrp1*^{ΔCd11c} mice (fig. S15, E and F). Thus, SAAs and myeloid cell LRP1 both regulate T_H17 cell effector function.

Finally, *Saa*^{-/-} and *Lrp1*^{ΔCd11c} mice were deficient in the production of IgA, which defends against invading intestinal pathogens and maintains homeostasis with the microbiota (36–38). *Saa*^{-/-} mice had reduced frequencies and numbers of small intestinal IgA⁺ cells (Fig. 6, G and H) and decreased fecal IgA concentrations (Fig. 6I) when compared with wild-type mice. Similarly, frequencies and numbers of IgA-producing cells (Fig. 6, P and Q)

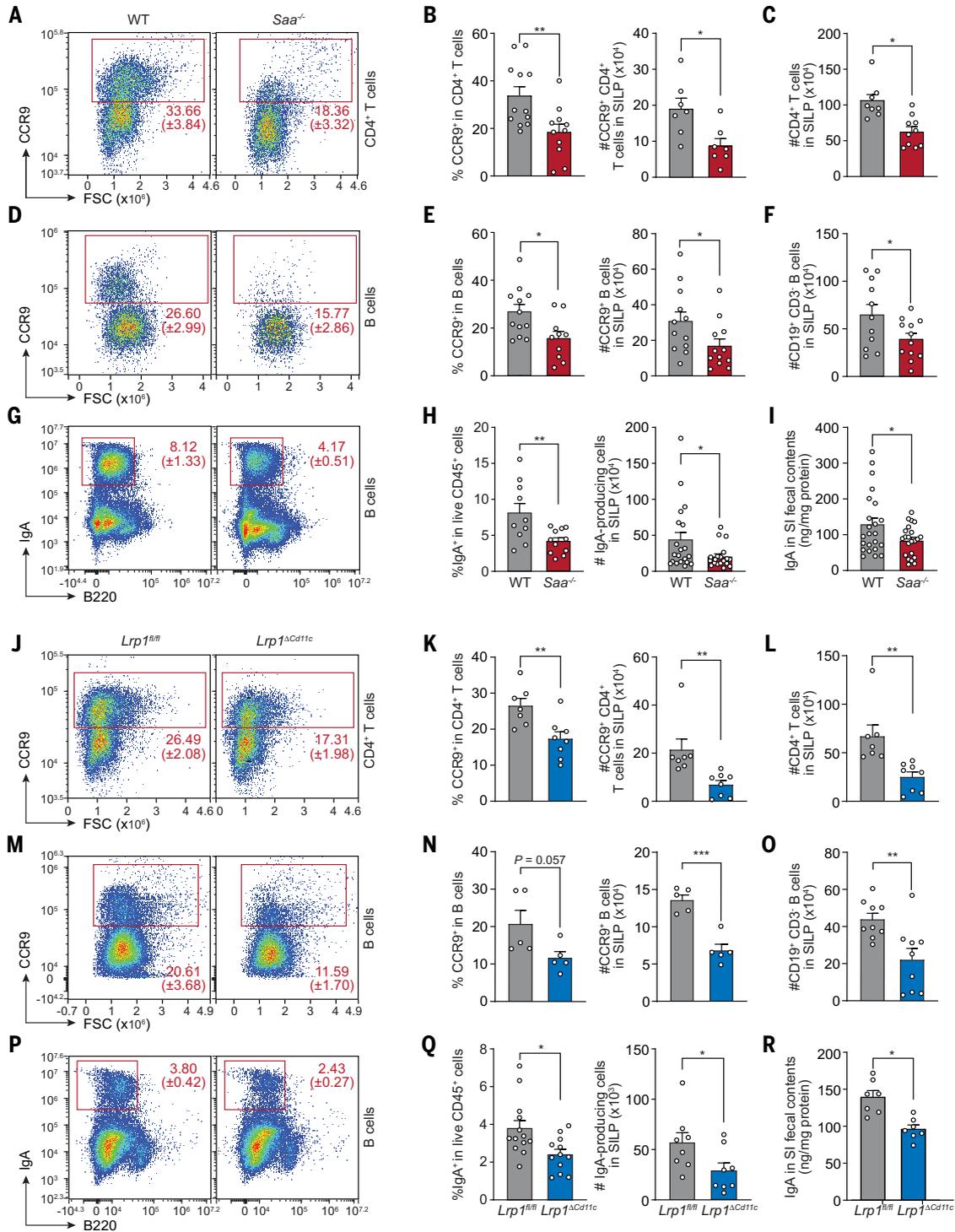


Fig. 6. SAA and LRP1 promote vitamin A-dependent immunity in the intestine.

Small intestinal lamina propria (SILP) cells from wild-type (WT) and *Saa*^{-/-} mice [(A) to (I)], and *Lrp1*^{fl/fl} and *Lrp1*^{Δ*CD11c*} mice [(J) to (R)] were analyzed. (A and J) Representative flow cytometry plots of CD4⁺ T cells (live CD45⁺CD3⁺CD4⁺CD19⁻CD8⁻). (B and K) Frequencies of CCR9⁺ cells in CD4⁺ T cells (left) and absolute numbers of CCR9⁺CD4⁺ T cells (right). (C and L) Total numbers of CD4⁺ T cells (CD45⁺CD3⁺CD4⁺CD19⁻CD8⁻). (D and M) Representative flow cytometry plots of B cells (live CD45⁺CD19⁺CD3⁻).

(E and N) Frequencies of CCR9⁺ cells in B cells (left) and absolute numbers of CCR9⁺ B cells (right). (F and O) Total numbers of B cells (CD45⁺CD19⁺CD3⁻). (G and P) Representative flow cytometry plots of IgA⁺ cells (live CD45⁺CD3⁻). (H and Q) Frequencies of IgA⁺ cells in total live CD45⁺ cells (left) and numbers of IgA-producing cells (IgA⁺CD45⁺CD3⁻) (right). (I and R) Quantification of IgA from small intestinal fecal contents by ELISA. Data represent $n \geq 5$ mice per group from at least two independent experiments. Means \pm SEMs are plotted. * $P < 0.05$; ** $P < 0.01$; Student's *t* test.

and fecal IgA concentrations (Fig. 6R) were decreased in the small intestines of *Lrp1^{ΔCd11c}* when compared with *Lrp1^{fl/fl}* mice. These findings are consistent both with the overall reduction in intestinal B cells as a result of reduced homing and with the role of RA-producing myeloid cells in promoting the development of IgA-producing cells from B cells (2). The differences in immune cell frequencies did not arise from altered microbiota taxonomic composition because this was similar when comparing wild-type to *Saa^{-/-}* mice and *Lrp1^{fl/fl}* to *Lrp1^{ΔCd11c}* mice (fig. S16). Thus, SAA and LRP1 promote intestinal lymphocyte homing and IgA production, thereby implicating SAA-mediated retinol delivery in the development of vitamin A-dependent intestinal immunity.

SAA and LRP1 promote immunity to enteric bacterial infection

The importance of SAAs and LRP1 for intestinal adaptive immunity suggests that these proteins might promote immunity to enteric bacterial infection. We tested this idea using the gastrointestinal pathogen *Salmonella enterica* serovar Typhimurium (*S. Typhimurium*). Before infection, mice were immunized twice by oral gavage with heat-killed *S. Typhimurium* (Fig. 7A). This resulted in higher levels of *S. Typhimurium*-specific fecal IgA in wild-type mice compared with *Saa^{-/-}* mice and in *Lrp1^{fl/fl}* mice compared with *Lrp1^{ΔCd11c}* mice (Fig. 7, B and D). Accordingly, *Saa^{-/-}* and *Lrp1^{ΔCd11c}* mice showed higher mortality when orally infected with *S. Typhimurium* after immunization (Fig. 7, C and E). Thus, SAAs and LRP1 promote specific immunity after oral immunization and resistance to enteric pathogen infection.

Discussion

We have identified SAAs as retinol-binding proteins that deliver retinol to RA-producing intestinal myeloid cells. SAA-retinol complexes bind to LRP1 on the myeloid cell surface and are endocytosed, which provides retinol for the enzymatic generation of RA. Consequently, SAAs and LRP1 promote the development of vitamin A-dependent adaptive immunity, including B and T cell homing to the intestine and IgA production, and enhance resistance to enteric infection after immunization. Our findings therefore identify a molecular basis for retinol acquisition by intestinal myeloid cells and illuminate a mechanism that is essential for vitamin A-dependent immunity (fig. S17).

Previously, we had found that vitamin A promotes epithelial cell *Saa* expression through the transcription factor RAR β , which is activated by RA and binds directly to *Saa* promoters (17). *Rarb^{ΔIEC}* mice, which selectively lack RAR β in intestinal epithelial cells, have

defects in intestinal vitamin A-dependent immunity, including reduced gut homing of CD4⁺ T cells and lowered IgA production (17). Our finding that SAAs deliver retinol to myeloid cells provides a molecular explanation for reduced vitamin A-dependent immunity in *Rarb^{ΔIEC}* mice. Furthermore, *Rarb^{ΔIEC}* mice show reduced SAA expression that is restricted to epithelial cells (17), suggesting that epithelial SAAs, rather than SAAs produced by the liver, deliver retinol to intestinal myeloid cells.

Our results provide molecular insight into how the intestinal microbiota shapes intes-

tinal adaptive immunity. Expression of SAAs by intestinal epithelial cells requires the microbiota (39, 40), which activates *Saa* expression through an immunological signaling circuit (16). Our findings suggest that gut microbes promote vitamin A-dependent adaptive immunity by regulating epithelial SAA expression. These findings help explain long-standing observations of reduced numbers of B cells and CD4⁺ T cells and lowered IgA production in the intestines of germ-free mice (41).

A key question for future research is whether SAAs deliver retinol to other target cells. For example, our finding that 3T3-L1 adipocytes

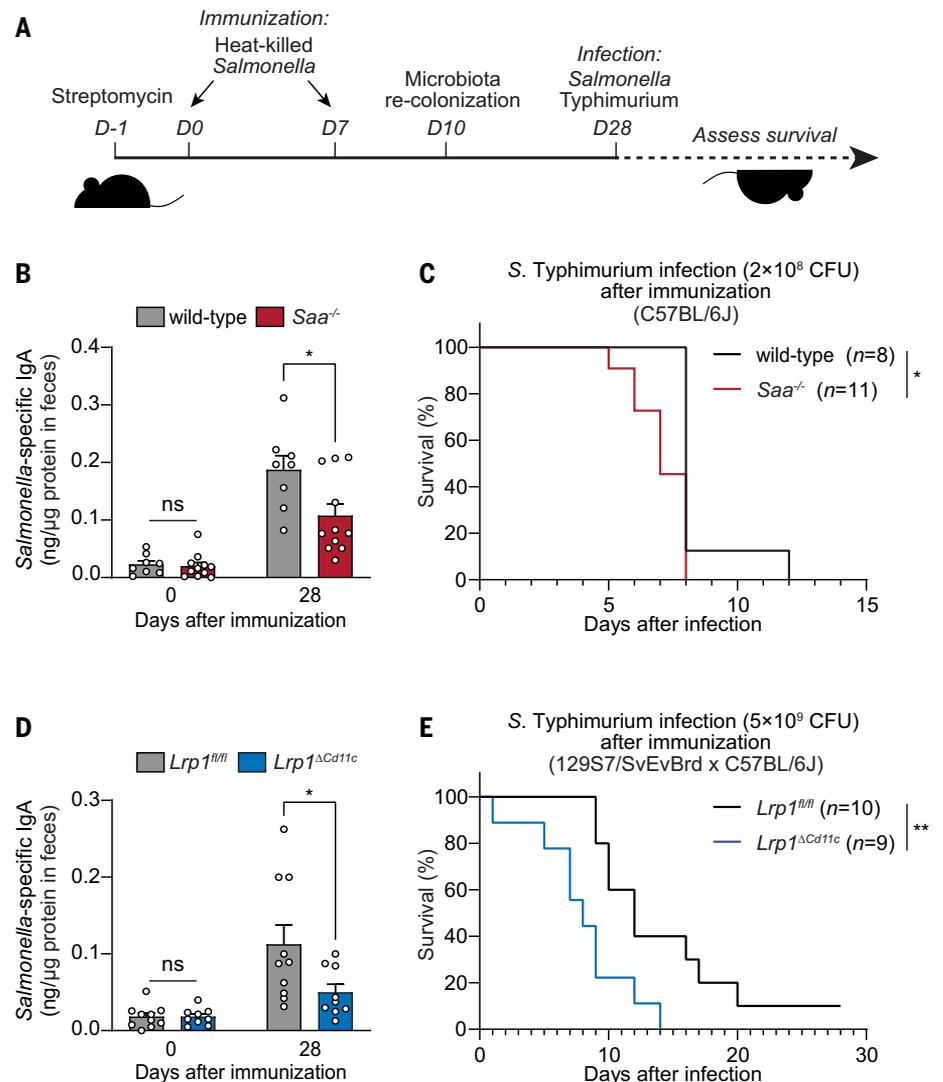


Fig. 7. SAA and LRP1 promote immunity to enteric bacterial infection. (A) Wild-type and *Saa^{-/-}* mice [(B) and (C)] and *Lrp1^{fl/fl}* and *Lrp1^{ΔCd11c}* mice [(D) and (E)] were immunized with 10^{10} CFU of heat-killed *S. Typhimurium* twice through oral gavage. Four weeks after the first immunization, the mice were orally infected with 2×10^8 CFU (C) and 5×10^9 CFU (E) of log-phase *S. Typhimurium* (the infection dose differs because resistance to infection differs according to mouse background). (B) and (D) *S. Typhimurium*-specific fecal IgA was measured by ELISA. Means \pm SEMs are plotted. * $P < 0.05$; Student's *t* test. (C) and (E) Survival rates were monitored after infection. Data represent results from five cohoused cages of wild-type and *Saa^{-/-}* littermates [(B) and (D)] and five cohoused cages of *Lrp1^{fl/fl}* and *Lrp1^{ΔCd11c}* littermates [(D) and (E)]. * $P < 0.05$; ** $P < 0.01$; ns, not significant; log-rank test.

express LRP1 suggests that SAAs may deliver retinol to adipose tissue, which is a major extrahepatic retinol storage site (18). Additionally, SAAs may deliver retinol to T_H17 cells, thereby promoting T_H17 cell effector functions (16). Supporting this idea, T_H17 cell function requires vitamin A, as mice given a vitamin A-deficient diet show reduced intestinal IL-17 production (12), and T_H17 cells from mice lacking T cell RAR α produce less IL-17 (12). In vitro experiments suggest that SAAs affect T_H17 cells through a direct interaction with the T cells (16, 42). It is possible that the expression of LRP1 on T cells, although lower than that on myeloid cells, is sufficient to support SAA binding and retinol uptake. Alternatively, T cells may express a distinct SAA receptor. However, our finding that T_H17 cell effector functions are reduced in *Lrp1^{ACd11c}* mice suggests the involvement of LRP1-expressing myeloid cells. This is consistent with a previously reported requirement for myeloid cells in IL-17 production by T cells in response to commensal bacteria (43, 44).

SAAs also carry retinol in the circulation and protect against systemic bacterial infection (14). It therefore appears likely that SAAs also deliver retinol to cells that promote systemic immunity. This is a topic of ongoing and future research that should clarify whether SAAs represent a general mechanism for mobilizing retinol to the immune system during a microbiological or immunological challenge.

Finally, by illuminating how vitamin A is mobilized to the intestinal immune system, our results may offer additional approaches for enhancing resistance to infection and for increasing the efficacy of mucosal vaccines, which depend on adequate dietary vitamin A (45). Our findings also suggest the possibility of selectively regulating the availability of retinol to the immune system during inflammatory disease, perhaps by deploying small-molecule inhibitors of the SAA-retinol or SAA-LRP1 binding interactions.

Materials and methods

Mice

C57BL/6 wild-type, *Saa^{-/-}*, *Lrp1^{fl/fl}*, and *Lrp1^{ACd11c}* mice were bred and maintained in the barrier facility at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center. *Saa^{-/-}* mice were generated using CRISPR-Cas9 genome editing on a C57BL/6J background (15). *Lrp1^{fl/fl}* mice (46) on a 129S7/SvEvBrd genetic background were used to generate a CD11c⁺ cell-specific *Lrp1* knockout (*Lrp1^{ACd11c}*) mouse by crossing with a mouse expressing Cre recombinase under the control of the CD11c promoter [Jackson Laboratories; B6.Cg-Tg (Itgax-cre)1-IReiz/J]. Mice 8 to 12 weeks of age were used for all experiments and cohoused littermates were used as controls. Experiments were performed using protocols approved by the Institutional

Animal Care and Use Committees of the UT Southwestern Medical Center.

Cell culture

Cell lines were purchased from ATCC and cultured at 37°C under 5% CO₂. 3T3-L1 preadipocytes (ATCC CL-173) were cultured in Dulbecco's minimum essential medium (DMEM) containing 10% bovine calf serum, 100 U/ml of penicillin, and 100 µg/ml of streptomycin until confluence. Two days postconfluence, the cells were differentiated with 1.5 µg/ml of insulin, 1 µM dexamethasone, 500 µM 3-isobutyl-1-methylxanthine (IBMX), and 1 µM rosiglitazone in DMEM/F12 (1:1) containing 10% fetal bovine serum (FBS). After 48 hours of differentiation, the cells were treated with 1.5 µg/ml insulin in DMEM/F12 (1:1) with 10% (v/v) FBS, 100 U/ml of penicillin, and 100 µg/ml of streptomycin. The culture medium was changed every 2 days for 7 to 9 days. Wild-type and *Lrp1*-deficient murine embryonic fibroblasts, MEF1 (ATCC CRL-2214) and PEAI3 (ATCC CRL-2216), respectively, were cultured in DMEM containing 10% FBS, 100 U/ml of penicillin, and 100 µg/ml of streptomycin. Isolated bone marrow cells from femurs and tibiae were cultured for 6 days in RPMI containing 10% FBS, 50 µM β -mercaptoethanol, 100 U/ml of penicillin, 100 µg/ml of streptomycin, and 20 ng/ml of GM-CSF (29). Adherent and loosely adherent cells were harvested by scraping and subjected for further experiments.

Proteins, antibodies, and reagents

Recombinant mouse SAA1 and SAA3 were expressed and purified as described previously (14, 15). Recombinant Fc-tagged human LRP1-CII, -CIII, and -CIV containing ligand-binding cluster II, III, and IV of LRP1 were purchased from R&D Biosystems. 6X histidine-tagged human RAP was purchased from Molecular Innovations and was used in binding assays after histidine-tag removal as described previously (15). Briefly, RAP protein was digested with thrombin (Roche), incubated overnight at 4°C, and purified using size exclusion chromatography on a Superdex 75 10/300 GL column (GE Life Sciences) in phosphate-buffered saline (PBS) with 10% glycerol. Rabbit anti-SAA antiserum was produced previously (14). Armenian hamster monoclonal anti-CD11c (Clone N418) and rabbit monoclonal anti-LRP1 antibody (Clone EPR3724) recognizing 85-kDa light chain of LRP1 were purchased from Abcam. Mouse monoclonal anti-6X His tag (Clone HIS.H8) (Abcam) and PE-conjugated mouse monoclonal anti-6X His tag (Clone AD1.1.10) (R&D Biosystems) were used for the detection of His-tagged SAA by immunoblotting and flow cytometry respectively. Antibodies used for flow cytometry analysis are listed in table S3. All-trans retinol was purchased from Sigma-Aldrich.

Immunofluorescence assay

Mouse ileum was washed with PBS, fixed in Bouin's fixative overnight at 4°C and embedded in paraffin. Sections were washed in xylene twice and rehydrated in decreasing concentrations of ethanol (100, 95, 70, 50, and 0%). Slides were boiled in 10 mM sodium citrate (pH 6.0) for 25 min and washed twice in PBS. For immunofluorescence assay of adipocytes, cells were seeded and differentiated on cover glasses, fixed with 4% paraformaldehyde for 15 min at room temperature, and washed with PBS-T (PBS, 0.05% Tween-20). Samples were incubated with blocking buffer (10% FBS, 1% BSA, 1% Triton X-100 in PBS) for 1 hour at room temperature and incubated with primary antibodies (anti-LRP1, 1:200 dilution; anti-CD11c, 1:200 dilution) in the blocking buffer at 4°C overnight. Cy3 anti-rabbit secondary antibody (Thermo Fisher Scientific) and AlexaFluor 647-conjugated anti-Armenian hamster secondary antibody (Abcam) were diluted 1:400 and applied to slides for 1 hour at room temperature in the dark. Samples were washed and mounted with 4',6-diamidino-2-phenylindole (DAPI) Fluoromount-G (Southern Biotechnology). For a nonpermeabilizing staining condition, buffers without Triton X-100 were used. Images were captured using a Zeiss AxioImage MI microscope with Zeiss AxioCam MRm Rev3 and Zeiss EC Plan-Neofluar 10X/0.30 M27 objective lens.

Analysis of cell surface binding of SAA by flow cytometry

Wild-type (*Lrp1^{+/+}*) and *Lrp1*-deficient (*Lrp1^{-/-}*) fibroblasts were detached from culture plates with PBS with 1.5 mM EDTA and washed twice with serum-free media. Suspensions containing 2×10^5 cells in 0.2 ml of serum-free culture media were incubated with His-SAA1. For competition studies, nontagged SAA1 proteins were added as indicated together with His-tagged SAA1 proteins. After incubation for 1 hour at 4°C, cells were washed twice with ice-cold PBS, fixed with 4% paraformaldehyde, stained with PE-conjugated anti-His-tag antibody, and subjected to flow cytometry by using LSRII (BD Bioscience) or Novocyte 3005 (ACEA Biosciences). To assess LRP1-specific SAA binding, the differences in SAA binding ($\Delta\text{MFI} = \text{MFI}^{\text{SAA}} - \text{MFI}^{\text{PBS}}$) between wild-type cells and *Lrp1*-deficient cells were analyzed, expressed as $\Delta\Delta\text{MFI}$ ($\Delta\text{MFI}^{\text{Lrp1}+/+} - \Delta\text{MFI}^{\text{Lrp1}-/-}$), and fit with GraphPad Prism 7 using the nonlinear regression, one site-binding equation. For adipocytes, His-SAA1 proteins were added to 2×10^5 differentiated adipocytes grown in 96-well plates in DMEM/F12 (1:1) and processed with the same staining procedures. To analyze SAA binding to lamina propria cells, one million small intestinal lamina propria (SILP) cells were isolated and incubated with the His-SAA1-retinol complex (7 µM)

for 20 min at 4°C in serum-free RPMI. The cells were then washed and fixed as described above and stained for His-tag to detect His-SAA1 alongside immune cell markers.

Cellular retinol uptake assay

Radioactive 11,12-³H(N)-retinol was purchased from PerkinElmer. For the in vitro retinol uptake assay, SAA1 was incubated with ³H-retinol at a 3:1 molar ratio at 4°C for at least 2 hours in serum-free media containing protease inhibitors (Roche). The SAA1-retinol complex was purified using PD-10 desalting column (GE Healthcare). Cells were incubated with 480 nM of SAA1-³H-retinol complex or free ³H-retinol in the serum-free media at 37°C and 5% CO₂ (Fig. 2F). Cells were incubated with 600 nM SAA1-³H-retinol complex with and without RAP in serum-free media at 4°C for 1 hour, washed twice with cold media, and incubated at 37°C and 5% CO₂ for 3 hours (Fig. 2G) and for 2 hours (Fig. 4C). The reactions were stopped by washing the cells with ice-cold PBS and solubilizing the cells in Biosol solution (National Diagnostics). For the in vivo retinol uptake assay, ³H-retinol was diluted in corn oil and fed to mice (1 μCi per mouse). Fifteen to 18 hours later, immune cells were isolated from the small intestine, and CD11c⁺ cells were isolated by magnetic sorting. Cells (2 × 10⁵) were solubilized in 0.5 ml of Biosol solution. A 3.5-ml volume of Biosol solution (National Diagnostics) was mixed with each sample and radioactivity was measured with a liquid scintillation analyzer (PerkinElmer) and normalized to cell number.

SAA-receptor purification and identification

A hetero-bifunctional cross-linker, Sulfo-SANPAH (Thermo Fisher Scientific), was used to cross-link SAA with its putative receptor on the adipocyte surface, similar to a previously described procedure (27). The amine-reactive group on the cross-linker was first covalently linked to the purified His-SAA1 by incubating 25 μM of purified His-SAA1 protein with 2.3 mM sulfo-SANPAH in PBS for 1 hour on ice. The reaction was stopped by adding glycine to a final concentration of 80 mM and SAA1-cross-linker conjugate was purified using a PD-10 desalting column (GE Healthcare) in PBS. The conjugate was mixed with retinol and then added to adipocytes in serum-free medium. After 20 min of incubation at 4°C, the mixture was ultraviolet (UV)-irradiated to cross-link SAA1 and its receptor using a UV transilluminator (Syngene). Cell pellets were collected and lysed by sonication in PBS containing 1% Triton X-100 and 0.1% SDS to solubilize membrane proteins. The proteins were bound to Ni-NTA resin (Qiagen) overnight at 4°C. The resin was washed twice with PBS and three times with PBS containing 25 mM imidazole. SAA1-receptor complexes

were eluted in PBS containing 250 mM imidazole, mixed with SDS-loading buffer, and subjected to SDS-polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis (SDS-PAGE). The protein band identified by immunoblot as containing SAA, which was absent in the negative controls, was excised, digested with trypsin, and run on an Orbitrap Fusion Lumos mass spectrometer for liquid chromatography with tandem mass spectrometry (LC-MS/MS) analysis at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center Proteomics Core. Proteins were identified using Proteome Discover 2.2.

Immunoblotting assay

Tissue or cell lysates were separated using a 4 to 20% gradient SDS-PAGE gel then transferred to a polyvinylidene difluoride (PVDF) membrane. Membranes were blocked with 5% nonfat milk in TBS-T buffer (0.1% Tween-20 in Tris-buffered saline), and then were sequentially incubated with primary antibodies and horseradish peroxidase (HRP)-conjugated secondary antibodies. Membranes were visualized using a Bio-Rad ChemiDoc Touch system.

Recombinant expression and purification of full-length LRP1 ectodomain

The full-length ectodomain of human LRP1 [residues 1-4414, National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI) accession no.: NM_002332.3] and human RAP (NCBI accession no.: NM_002337.4) containing a C-terminal 6xHis tag were cloned into a pEZT-BM vector (47). The baculovirus was generated in Sf9 cells (Thermo Fisher Scientific) following the standard protocol. To boost the protein yield, the full-length ectodomain of human LRP1 was coexpressed with RAP in HEK293F cells (Life Technologies) at a ratio of 1:40 (virus:cells, v:v) and supplemented with 10 mM sodium butyrate. Cells were cultured in suspension at 37°C and the medium was harvested after 48 hours of infection. The medium containing the secreted LRP1-RAP protein complex was incubated with Ni-NTA resin (Qiagen) overnight with gentle agitation at 4°C. To purify LRP1-RAP protein complex, the resin was collected on a disposable gravity column (Bio-Rad), washed three times with buffer A (15 mM Tris-HCl pH 8.0, 150 mM NaCl, and 30 mM imidazole), and the His-tagged RAP protein together with the nontagged LRP1 protein was eluted with buffer B (15 mM Tris-HCl pH 8.0, 150 mM NaCl, and 300 mM imidazole). Size exclusion chromatography (Superose 6 Increase 10/300 GL, GE Healthcare) was used to remove the excess free RAP protein and purify the LRP1-RAP protein complex in buffer containing 10 mM Tris-HCl pH 7.2 and 100 mM NaCl. To dissociate the LRP1-RAP protein complex and purify the free LRP1 protein, fractions containing the LRP1-RAP protein complex were pooled together and

subjected to size exclusion chromatography in buffer containing 10 mM MES (pH 5.5) and 100 mM NaCl. Fractions from size exclusion chromatography were analyzed by Coomassie staining after SDS-PAGE, and the fractions containing the full-length ectodomain of human LRP1 protein were pooled and concentrated for future experiments. The fractions containing RAP protein were pooled separately and used in experiments.

Pull-down assay

Fc-tagged human LRP1-CII, LRP1-CIII, LRP1-CIV, and control IgG-Fc were used (R&D Systems). LRP1 proteins (250 nM) and IgG-Fc were individually attached to 40 μl of Dynabead protein G magnetic beads (Thermo Fisher Scientific) using Fc-tags. After unbound proteins were removed by washing twice with PBS, SAA1-retinol complex (800 nM) was added to the beads and incubated for overnight at 4°C. The beads were washed five times with PBS containing 0.025% Tween-20 and the bound protein complexes were isolated by magnetic separation.

Size exclusion chromatography and purification of the SAA-retinol complex

Binding of SAA1 to the LRP1 ectodomain was confirmed by size exclusion chromatography. Purified SAA1 was incubated with retinol at a molar ratio of 1:1.5 at 4°C in the dark for 20 min to allow formation of the SAA1-retinol complex, followed by passage over a Superdex 75 10/300 GL size exclusion chromatography column (GE Healthcare) to remove the excess retinol. Next, the SAA1-retinol complex was mixed with the purified full-length ectodomain of LRP1 at a molar ratio of 10:1 in buffer containing 10 mM MES pH 5.5 and 100 mM NaCl. The mixture was incubated on ice for 1 hour and then loaded onto a Superose 6 increase 10/300 GL column (GE Healthcare). As controls, LRP1 ectodomain and SAA1-retinol were individually analyzed in the same way.

Microscale thermophoresis

The dissociation constant for the LRP1-SAA1 interaction was determined by microscale thermophoresis (48). Purified SAA1 was labeled with Alexa Fluor 594 using the Microscale Protein Labeling Kit (Invitrogen). Labeled SAA1 was incubated with retinol [or dimethyl sulfoxide (DMSO)] at a 3:1 molar ratio for 2 hours at 4°C in MST buffer (150 mM NaCl, 5 mM CaCl₂, 0.05% (v/v) Tween 20, and 20 mM HEPES, pH 6.5). Next, a 16-fold titration series of purified LRP1 ectodomain (0 to 1.75 μM) diluted 1:1 with the MST buffer was mixed with SAA1 at 50 nM. The mixtures containing diluted LRP1 and SAA1 were incubated for 30 min at room temperature in the dark to enable binding. Each titration sample was then loaded into a premium capillary (NanoTemper)

and analyzed on a Monolith NT.115 Pico (NanoTemper). LRP1-dependent fluorescence enhancement was observed, and absolute fluorescence was used to calculate the K_d . The specificity of the binding event was carefully validated by the SDS-denaturation test according to the manufacturer's protocol. Binding isotherms were deduced by using PALMIST software (49) and the graph was created in GUSSI (50).

Trypsin protection assay

Wild-type and *Lrp1*-deficient fibroblasts (2.5×10^5) were incubated with His-SAA1-retinol complex (1 μ M) at 4°C in serum-free DMEM for 1 hour to allow SAA to bind to cell surface LRP1. Unbound SAAs in the media were removed and cells were washed twice with cold PBS. Prewarmed DMEM was added, and the cells were moved to 37°C to initiate endocytosis. In some cases, 25 μ M Pitstop2 (Abcam) was added to the cells to block clathrin-mediated endocytosis before the 37°C incubation. After 30 min, cells were treated with 0.0125% Trypsin-EDTA (Thermo Fisher Scientific) for 3 min at 37°C. Cells were then lysed for immunoblotting analyses or fixed with 4% paraformaldehyde for flow cytometry analyses, and SAA1 was detected using the anti-His-antibody.

Quantitative real-time polymerase chain reaction (qPCR)

cDNA was synthesized from purified RNA using M-MLV Reverse Transcriptase (Thermo Fisher Scientific). qPCR was performed using TaqMan assays (Thermo Fisher Scientific) on a QuantStudio 7 Flex Real-Time PCR System (Applied Biosystems). Relative expression values were determined using the comparative Ct ($\Delta\Delta$ Ct) method (51), and transcript abundances were normalized to *Gapdh* transcript abundance. Absolute RNA transcript copy numbers were determined from standards and the results are reported as copies of transcript of interest/copies of *Gapdh*. TaqMan probe assay IDs are provided in table S2.

Lamina propria immune cell isolation and flow cytometry analysis

Immune cells from small intestinal lamina propria were isolated as previously described with minor modification (17). Briefly, the small intestine was flushed with 20 ml of ice-cold PBS with 3% FBS, opened longitudinally, cut into 1.5-cm pieces, and washed three times with vortexing for 1 min in 10 ml of ice-cold PBS with 3% FBS. The pieces were incubated with 15 ml of PBS with 3% FBS, 1 mM EDTA, and 1 mM dithiothreitol (DTT) for 15 min at 37°C with rotation on a platform shaker (250 rpm). The epithelial cells and intraepithelial lymphocytes were collected by passing through a 100- μ m cell strainer. The intestine pieces were washed in PBS with 3% FBS and

placed in 20 ml of digestion solution [RPMI, 3% FBS, 0.2 mg/ml of collagenase IV (Sigma), 0.15 mg/ml of DNase I (Sigma), and 0.75 U/ml of Dispase II (Sigma)]. After incubation at 37°C for 25 min with rotation on a platform shaker (250 rpm), the solution was vortexed and passed through a 40- μ m cell strainer. Cells from EDTA treatment and enzyme digestion were combined and filtered through a glass wool column (Thermo Fisher Scientific) to remove epithelial cells. The immune cells were further isolated by Percoll gradient separation collected at the 40 to 80% interphase of the Percoll gradient. After washing twice with PBS (3% FBS), the cells were either used immediately for experiments or fixed overnight in 1 ml of PBS with 3% FBS, 2 mM EDTA, and 0.2% paraformaldehyde at 4°C. For the analyses shown in Fig. 6 and fig. S4, Peyer's patches were removed before the immune cell isolation process. For intracellular staining (LRP1, IgA, FOXP3, ROR γ t, and IL-17A), cells were first stained with surface markers, and then fixed, permeabilized, and stained using eBioscience™ Foxp3/Transcription factor staining buffer set (Thermo Fisher Scientific). Flow cytometry was performed with a LSRII or a Novocyte 3005 and data were analyzed with FlowJo (Tree Star) and NovoExpress (ACEA Biosciences) softwares. For CD11c⁺ cell isolation, dead cells were first removed by using dead cell removal kit following manufacturer's protocol (Miltenyi Biotec). Cells were incubated with anti-CD11c microbeads and then immunomagnetically sorted by sequential passage over two MACS separation columns (Miltenyi Biotec), resulting in ~90% purity (fig. S9, A and B). To analyze IL-17 production in figs. S14 and S15, 1×10^6 cells were treated with 50 ng/ml of phorbol myristate acetate, 1 mM ionomycin, and 1 mg/ml of brefeldin A for 4 hours at 37°C (17). Antibodies used for flow cytometry analysis are listed in table S3.

Measurement of RALDH activity by Aldefluor assay

RALDH activity was measured by Aldefluor assay (Stemcell Technologies) following the manufacturer's protocol with minor modifications. One million immune cells recovered from the small intestine were resuspended in 1 ml of assay buffer. Aldefluor reagent was added to each sample and incubated at 37°C for 30 min. The brightly fluorescent RALDH-expressing cells were detected by flow cytometry in the green channel (520 to 540 nm). As a control, the ALDH/RALDH inhibitor diethylaminobenzaldehyde (DEAB) was added to half of each sample.

16S ribosomal RNA (rRNA) gene sequencing and data analysis

Fecal contents from the ileum and colon were collected from wild-type and *Saa*^{-/-} littermates

and *Lrp1*^{fl/fl} and *Lrp1* ^{Δ Cd11c} littermates, which were cocaged. DNA was extracted and purified using the FastDNA Spin Kit (MP Biomedicals) and the FastPrep-24 Homogenizer (MP Biomedicals) following the manufacturer's protocol (52). 16S rRNA gene sequencing and data analysis were done by the UT Southwestern Microbiome Research Laboratory. Briefly, sequencing libraries were prepared following the Illumina Nextera protocol (Part no. 15044223 Rev. B) with primers flanking the hypervariable regions V3-V4. Sequencing was performed on MiSeqDX using the PE300 (paired end 300 bp) v3 kit. Taxonomic classification and Operational Taxonomic Unit (OTU) abundance were analyzed using the CLC Bio microbial genomics module. Principle component analysis was performed using the "prcomp" function in R and differential abundance analysis was performed using DESeq2 (53).

S. Typhimurium infection

Mouse survival after infection with *Salmonella enterica* serovar Typhimurium (*S. Typhimurium*) was measured after immunization with heat-killed bacteria as described elsewhere (54, 55). *S. Typhimurium* strain SL1344 (streptomycin-resistant) was grown in Luria-Bertani (LB) broth containing 50 μ g/ml of streptomycin at 37°C. For immunization, heat-killed *S. Typhimurium* was prepared in PBS by incubation at 65°C for 3 hours. Mice were treated with streptomycin (20 mg per mouse) by oral gavage a day before immunization, and then orally immunized with heat-killed *S. Typhimurium* [10^{10} colony-forming units (CFU) equivalents per mouse] twice at 7-day intervals. Three days after the second immunization, mice were colonized with a normal gut microbiota by inoculation with a fecal slurry prepared from the intestinal contents of conventional wild-type mice reared in the UT Southwestern mouse facility. Four weeks after the first immunization, mice were inoculated by oral gavage with 2×10^8 bacteria for wild-type and *Saa*^{-/-} mice (on a C57BL/6J background) or with 5×10^9 bacteria for *Lrp1*^{fl/fl} and *Lrp1* ^{Δ Cd11c} mice (on a 129S7/SvEvBrd \times C57BL/6J background). The dose varied because resistance to *S. Typhimurium* infection varies according to mouse background.

S. Typhimurium-specific IgA was measured in feces as previously described (56). Briefly, lipopolysaccharide (LPS) was purified from *S. Typhimurium* SL1344 cultures using the LPS extraction kit (Abcam) and used as antigen for enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA). Then, 96-well microplates (Greiner Bio-one) were coated with LPS (1 μ g per well) in carbonate coating buffer (Thermo Scientific). The plates were then blocked with 5% w/v skim milk in TBST, and the fecal extracts were added to the plates. After washing, bound IgA was detected using HRP-conjugated goat

anti-mouse IgA antibody (Invitrogen) and Super-Signal ELISA Pico Chemiluminescent Substrate (Thermo Scientific).

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mice and edited the manuscript. Y.-J.B., Z.H., Y.L., S.G., P.R., and L.V.H. analyzed data. Y.-J.B. and L.V.H. wrote the paper.

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Data and materials availability: 16S rRNA gene sequencing data (fig. S16) have been submitted to the Sequence Read Archive (SRA) with BioProject IDs PRJNA727197 and PRJNA727212. *Lrp1^{fl/fl}* mice are available under a material transfer agreement with UTSW. All other lines in the study are commercially available. All other data are available in the main text or the supplementary materials.

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

<https://science.org/doi/10.1126/science.abf9232>

Figs. S1 to S17

Tables S1 to S3

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Serum amyloid A delivers retinol to intestinal myeloid cells to promote adaptive immunity

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SAAVING vitamin A-mediated immunity

The vitamin A metabolite retinol is critical for B and T cell development and homing to the gut. Intestinal myeloid cells such as dendritic cells and macrophages take up retinol and process it into retinoic acid (RA), which in turn initiates RA-dependent gene expression programs in lymphocytes. Bang *et al.* identified LDL receptor-related protein 1 (LRP1) as a myeloid cell surface receptor for retinol. LRP1 binds retinol chaperoned by serum amyloid A (SAA) proteins, and SAA-retinol complexes are then endocytosed and metabolized by myeloid cells. Mice lacking either Saa or myeloid-specific Lrp1 exhibited profound impairments in vitamin A-mediated immunity. B and T cell trafficking to the intestine, immunoglobulin A production by B cells, and protection from enteric *Salmonella* Typhimurium infection were all diminished when either of these crucial players was missing. —STS

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