

Thymic Malignancy Awareness Month

MAY



**Have you been diagnosed with a thymic tumor?
This information is for you!**

Thymic Epithelial Tumors...

...are very rare malignant neoplasms originating from the thymus, a small organ in the upper part of the chest behind the sternum, normally responsible for appropriate function of the immune system.

There are a number of thymic epithelial tumors, and the terminology often gets confused between them:

Thymomas

Thymomas are typically slow growing tumors that more or less resemble normal thymus. Despite their usual favorable outcome, thymomas are malignant tumors as they can metastasize and/or recur. People with thymoma often have other diseases of the immune system, most commonly MYASTHENIA GRAVIS, a disease in which the muscles become weak.

Thymic Carcinomas

In thymic carcinomas, the cells no longer look like normal thymic cells. Thymic carcinomas grow more quickly than thymomas and often have spread to other parts of the body when the cancer is found.

Thymic Neuroendocrine Tumors

Thymic neuroendocrine tumors are even less common than thymomas and thymic carcinomas. These tumors are also malignant.

How are they found?

Almost one-third of all thymic cancers have no symptoms when they are diagnosed. These are found by accident while doctors are looking for other things. At other times, symptoms include:

- Pain in the chest
- Difficulty with breathing
- Long standing cough
- Weakness in the muscles

If you have any of these symptoms, your doctor may perform a CT (computed tomography) and/or MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) scan that uses a computer to take pictures of your chest. Radiologist analyses CT/MRI scans searching for the tumor and assesses the stage, it means - what structures it invades. You might also be given a PET scan that may be able to detect metastases (secondary tumors) in other organs.



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How are thymic cancers treated?

The treatment you receive will depend on the type of your disease and its stage. The type of the disease is determined by a pathologist who analyses your tumor or its fragments under a microscope. The treatment methods include:

- **Surgery**
- **Radiation**
- **Chemotherapy**

Thymomas, thymic carcinomas and thymic neuroendocrine tumors are very rare. Not all doctors are familiar with them so your doctor may have to consult with other experts. Your case may need to be managed by a team including a thoracic surgeon, a radiation oncologist and/or medical oncologist, all working together with a radiologist and a pathologist experienced in thymic tumor diagnostics. The International Thymic Malignancy Interest Group (ITMIG) can assist in finding you a doctor that is familiar with thymic epithelial tumors.



The chance of recovery or recurrence depends on several factors:

- The type of tumor
- How far the tumor has grown beyond the thymus into other tissues or organs
- Whether the tumor can be removed completely by surgery
- The patient's general health
- Whether the tumor has just been diagnosed or has recurred



Need to talk with other patients? Join patients' Facebook support groups:



Thymoma Support Group



Thymic Carcinoma Group



Patient Advocate Group

or visit:



FOUNDATION FOR THYMIC CANCER RESEARCH

Need more information?

ITMIG non-profit Channel

Visit the **International Thymic Malignancy Interest Group** webpage and watch on YouTube recordings of webinars prepared by physicians with presentation of topics of interest to patients and answers to patient's questions on a variety of subjects related to thymic epithelial tumors.



International Thymic Malignancy Interest Group

<https://itmig.org>



Scan for access to ITMIG webpage and more information

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The flyer created by physicians and patients - members of ITMIG and Foundation For Thymic Cancer Research