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Thymus Cancer Causes, Risk Factors, and Prevention

Risk Factors

A risk factor is anything that affects your chance of getting a disease such as cancer. Learn more about the risk factors for thymus cancer.

- [What Are the Risk Factors for Thymus Cancer?](#)
- [Do We Know What Causes Thymus Cancer?](#)

Prevention

Because we do not know what causes most thymic cancers, it is not yet possible to know how to prevent them.

- [Can Thymus Cancer Be Prevented?](#)
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What Are the Risk Factors for Thymus Cancer?

A risk factor is anything that affects your chance of getting a disease such as cancer. Different cancers have different risk factors. For example, exposing the skin to strong sunlight is a risk factor for skin cancer. Smoking is a risk factor for lung cancer and

many others.

But risk factors don't tell us everything. Having a known risk factor, or even several risk factors, does not mean that you will get the disease. And many people who get the disease may not have had any known risk factors.

No specific inherited, environmental, or lifestyle risk factors have been strongly linked to thymoma or thymic carcinoma. Some studies have suggested a possible link with exposure to radiation to the upper chest area, but this has not been confirmed. The only known risk factors are age and ethnicity.

Age

The risk of this type of cancer goes up with age. This type of cancer is rare in children and young adults, is seen more often in middle-aged adults, and is most common in those in their 70s.

Ethnicity

In the US, this cancer most common in Asians and Pacific Islanders and least common in Whites and Latinos. It is more common in African Americans than in Whites.

References

See all references for Thymus Cancer (www.cancer.org/cancer/thymus-cancer/references.html)

Last Medical Review: October 4, 2017 Last Revised: October 4, 2017

Do We Know What Causes Thymus Cancer?

Not much is known about why thymus cancers develop in some people but not in

others. Researchers have found some DNA changes that occur more often in thymus cancer cells than in normal cells. (DNA is the chemical in each of our cells that makes up our genes — the instructions for how our cells function.) However, they are still not certain why these changes occur in some people, exactly how the changes occur, and how the changes might cause cancer to form.

References

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