

Although thymic B cells play a vital part in cell maintenance, their function is not completely known. Researchers are looking at how they work further.

Associated Conditions

Conditions that cause thymus gland malfunction can significantly affect a person's quality of life.

The following are some of the most frequent conditions:

Hyperactivity. Several illnesses can cause the thymus to grow and become hyperactive, or too active.

These might include:

- tumors of the thymus
- cancers of the lymphatic system
- Myasthenia Gravis (an autoimmune disease involving muscle weakness)
- Systemic Lupus Erythematosus (an autoimmune disease affecting the skin, joints, brain, kidneys, and other organs)
- Hyperthyroidism (the increased production of thyroid hormones)

Hyperactive thymus symptoms include:

- inflammation of the tonsils
- runny nose
- enlargement of the lymph nodes

Small Size or Atrophy. The thymus gland is often the biggest in newborns and early children. Some premature babies, however, may have a tiny thymus. This may increase their susceptibility to infections.

When people get older, their thymus atrophies or shrinks in size. This increases their chances of developing:

- cancer
- viral and bacterial infections
- autoimmune diseases

Thymus Cancer. Thymoma and thymic carcinoma are two kinds of cancer that may develop in the thymus. They are both rare types of cancer that develop in the cells that cover the thymus.

Thymoma is a cancer that grows slowly and seldom spreads beyond the thymus.

Thymic carcinoma is a more aggressive malignancy that is more difficult to treat.

These cancers may cause the following symptoms: