

Diagnosing Anal Cancer - A Quick Guide



Contents

This is a brief summary of the information on 'Diagnosing anal cancer' from CancerHelp UK. You will find more detailed information on the website.

In this information there are sections on

- Tests for anal cancer
- Further tests for anal cancer
- Questions for your doctor

Tests for anal cancer

If you think you may have anal cancer, you usually begin by seeing your GP. Your doctor will examine you and ask about your general health and symptoms. He or she will feel your abdomen and may examine your back passage (rectum) with a gloved finger.

At the hospital

If your GP is concerned, you will then either go to hospital for tests and X-rays, or to see a specialist in bowel problems (a colorectal surgeon). The specialist will examine your back passage, feel for enlarged glands (lymph nodes) in your groin and then arrange appointments for any tests you need.

Blood tests

You may have these to check how well your liver and kidneys are working. And to check blood cell levels, particularly red cells which could show that you've had bleeding (anaemia).

Rectal examination and biopsy

This is a more detailed examination that allows the doctor to see the inside of your rectum and large bowel. The doctor will put a tube into your back passage and take a small sample of tissue (a biopsy). The examination may just be of the rectum (proctoscopy) or rectum and lower bowel (sigmoidoscopy). Your bowel has to be empty, so you may need an enema beforehand.

Further tests for anal cancer

If your tests show you have anal cancer, you may need more tests to see if the cancer has spread.

Examination under anaesthetic

You have this test while asleep under general anaesthetic. It allows the doctor to examine you more closely and see how far the cancer has spread. They may take a small tissue sample (a biopsy) if you have not already had one taken.



Scans

Scans give doctors a detailed picture of the inside of your body. You may have a

- CT scan
- MRI scan
- Rectal ultrasound scan
- PET-CT scan

The test results will take a week or more to come through. You will probably feel anxious during this time. It may help to talk about how you are feeling to a friend or relative, a specialist nurse or a cancer support group.

What to ask your doctor about anal cancer tests

- What tests are you going to do?
- What are you looking for?
- Will the tests show whether I have cancer?
- Will you know what treatment I will need when you have the results?
- Are any of the tests painful?
- Do any of the tests have after effects?
- Can I have these tests as an outpatient?
- Should I bring someone with me when I have these tests?
- How long will the results take?
- Who will give me the test results?

More information

For more information about anal cancer, visit our website <http://cancerhelp.cancerresearchuk.org>

You will find a wide range of detailed, up to date information for people affected by cancer, including a clinical trials database that you can search for trials in the UK. You can view or print the information in a larger size if you need to.

For answers to your questions about cancer call our Cancer Information Nurses on **0808 800 4040**
9am till 5pm Monday to Friday

Adapted from Cancer Research UK's Patient Information Website CancerHelp UK in October 2010. CancerHelp UK is not designed to provide medical advice or professional services and is intended to be for educational use only. The information provided through CancerHelp UK and our nurse team is not a substitute for professional care and should not be used for diagnosing or treating a health problem or disease. If you have, or suspect you may have, a health problem you should consult your doctor. © Cancer Research UK 2010. Cancer Research UK is a registered charity in England and Wales (1089464) and in Scotland (SC041666).