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Types of anal cancer

## Types of anal cancer

The type of anal cancer you have depends on the type of cell the cancer started in. Most anal cancers start in a type of cell called squamous cells. Other rare types include adenocarcinoma and melanoma.

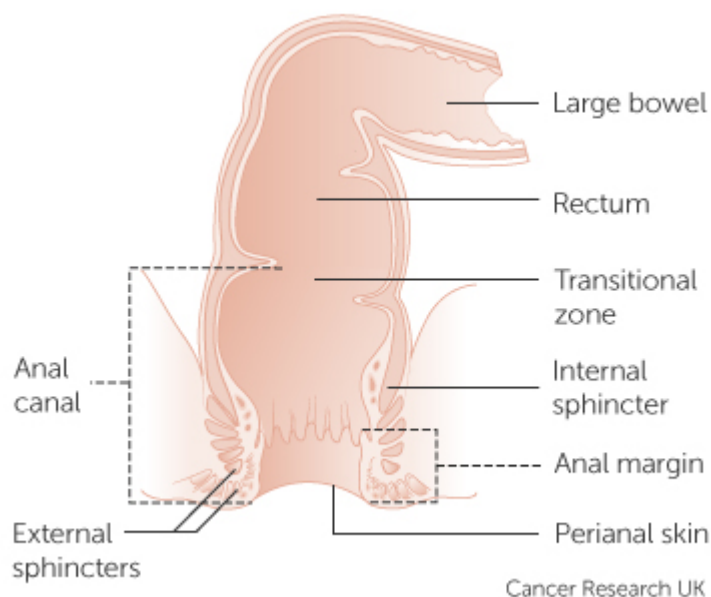
### Squamous cell cancer

Squamous cell cancers are the most common type of anal cancer. Squamous cell carcinomas make up around 90 out of 100 (90%) of all anal cancers. They are also called epidermoid cancers.

This type of anal cancer starts in squamous cells, which make up the lining of the anal canal and anal margin.

There are different types of squamous cell cancer. Doctors treat all these squamous cell types of anal cancer in the same way.

Your treatment also depends on the position of the cancer in your anus. Cancers that start in the anal canal might have different treatments than cancers that start in the anal margin.



### Rare types of anal cancer

There are other types of anal cancer that are very rare. These make up the rest of anal cancers. The treatment of these cancers differs from the treatment for squamous cell anal cancer.

## Adenocarcinoma

This develops from the glandular cells that produce mucus in the anal canal. It is rare, and doctors treat it in the same way as rectal cancer.

**[Read more about rectal cancer](#)**

## Basal cell carcinoma

This is a type of skin cancer. It starts in the skin around the anus (perianal skin).

**[Read more about basal cell skin cancer](#)**

## Melanoma

This is another type of skin cancer, it is very rare. It starts in skin cells called melanocytes. Doctors treat this type of anal cancer in the same way as melanomas.

**[Read more about melanoma](#)**

Other types of rare anal cancers include:

- gastrointestinal stromal tumours
- poorly differentiated neuroendocrine tumours
- lymphomas

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## + References

### **Anal cancer: ESMO Clinical Practice Guidelines for diagnosis, treatment and follow-up**

S Rao and others

Annals of Oncology, 2021. Volume 32, Issue 9, Pages 1087-1100

### **Anal cancer treatment**

UpToDate

Accessed July 2022

### **Classification and epidemiology of anal cancer**

UpToDate

Accessed July 2022

## Related links

### What is anal cancer?

Anal cancer is a rare cancer that starts in the anus. This is the opening at the very end of the large bowel.

### Tests for anal cancer

Your GP or specialist might arrange for you to have tests. They may arrange one or more tests.

### Survival for anal cancer

Survival depends on different factors. So no one can tell you exactly how long you will live. Because this cancer is less common, survival is harder to estimate than for other, more common cancers.

### Living with anal cancer

Getting practical and emotional support can help you cope with a diagnosis of cancer, life during treatment and life after cancer.

### Anal cancer main page

Anal cancer is cancer that starts in the anus. The anus is also called the anal canal.



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