

Anal Cancer

Anal cancer develops when normal cells in the anal canal become cancerous. Though rare, anal cancer is treatable. While the exact cause of anal cancer is unknown, the disease has been linked to human papillomavirus (HPV) infection, which is also associated with cervical cancer. When found early, anal cancer is highly treatable and often curable, highlighting the importance of screening.

Statistics

- In 2026, an estimated **11,270** new cases of anal cancer will be diagnosed in the United States.
- An estimated **1,700** people will die from anal cancer in 2026.

Risk Factors

Anal cancer risk is influenced by certain infections, lifestyle habits, and health conditions. The most common risk factors include:

- **Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Infection:** Ongoing infection with high-risk HPV, especially HPV 16, is a significant risk factor for anal cancer.
- **Anal Warts:** Having anal warts raises risk because the HPV types that cause warts often occur with types that can cause cancer.
- **Sexual Activity:** Having multiple sexual partners increases the likelihood of HPV and HIV infection.
- **Smoking:** People who smoke have a higher risk of anal cancer.
- **Weakened Immune System:** Conditions like HIV or medicines that suppress the immune system increase risk.

Symptoms

The symptoms of anal cancer differ from person to person, but here are some common signs:

- Bleeding from the anus or rectum
- Itching in or around the anus or rectum
- A lump or mass at the anal opening
- Feeling pain or fullness in the anal area
- Changes in bowel movement, such as thinner stools
- Abnormal discharge from the anus
- Loss of bowel control
- Swollen lumps or lymph nodes in the anal or groin areas

Many of these symptoms can be caused by non-cancerous conditions, such as hemorrhoids, anal fissures, or anal warts. It's important to have any ongoing or unusual symptoms checked by a healthcare provider so the cause can be properly diagnosed and treated.

Prevention

Since the exact cause of anal cancer is unknown, it's not possible to prevent this disease. However, there are things you can do to lower your risk of anal cancer, such as:

- Getting an HPV vaccine; it's most effective when given prior to age 17
- Stopping smoking
- Treating HIV with highly active antiretroviral therapy (HAART) to keep HIV under control and prevent its progression to AIDS
- Using a condom to provide protection against infection with HPV and HIV

Treatment Options

Depending on the stage of disease and individual factors, anal cancer may be treated using one or a combination of the following treatments:

- Radiation therapy
- Immunotherapy
- Chemotherapy

About Texas Oncology

Founded in 1986, Texas Oncology is an independent, physician-led practice and a member of the US Oncology Network. With more than 550 physicians and 300 locations across Texas, Texas Oncology serves over 71,000 new cancer patients each year.

Texas Oncology provides advanced care across 19 specialties and offers a comprehensive clinical trials and research program that has contributed to the development of more than 100 FDA-approved cancer therapies. Learn more at [TexasOncology.com](https://www.texasoncology.com).