

DARE- Digital Ano-rectal Examination

Information for patients



What is DARE?

Digital Ano-rectal Examination (or DARE) is when a doctor or nurse examines around your bottom (anus) and uses their finger to examine inside your bottom (anus and rectum). It is usually very quick and sometimes a little uncomfortable, but it is not usually painful. We know that people can feel embarrassed about having this examination done, but it is something we do very regularly and your doctor or nurse should be able to put you at ease.

Why are you being offered DARE?

We offer DARE to all men who have sex with men aged 50 years and over in our HIV clinics every 2 years. Anal cancers and pre-cancerous cell changes are seen more commonly in people living with HIV (PLWHIV) and in men who have sex with men.

You may also be offered DARE if you are a cis-or trans- woman or straight man who is at higher risk of anal cancer (e.g. those who have had an abnormal cervical smear).

Anal cancers often have no symptoms in the early stages, so DARE is used to identify changes as early as possible. Anal cancers affect only the very last few centimetres (about 2cm) of your bowel- so DARE is not the same as the bowel cancer screening test you may have received through the post after your 50th Birthday. You should still do this test even if you are having DARE.

For any cancer, the earlier cancers or pre-cancerous changes are found and treated, the better the chances of effective treatment or cure.

What happens during the examination?

Your nurse or doctor should offer to have another person in the room during the examination (a chaperone), but it is up to you whether you accept.

You will be asked to remove or lower your clothing and underwear from the waist down. You will be able to change in private behind a curtain.

You will be asked to lie sideways on the bed and bring your knees towards your chest.

The doctor or nurse will then use lubricating gel to gently insert a gloved finger into your anus to feel the internal surface of this.

They may also examine your prostate at the same time by gently pressing on it – this might make you feel like you need to pass urine but shouldn't hurt.

Once the examination is completed and you are dressed, the doctor or nurse will discuss their examination findings with you. After this they may recommend referral onto another speciality for further tests.

If you wish to stop the examination at any time during this process, you should let your doctor or nurse know.

What happens if I decline DARE?

It is up to you if you want this examination done while in clinic, and we completely respect your choice in this.

- If you aren't offered the examination and want it- please remind your clinician.
- If you say no to examination, you will be offered it again in about two years.

In the meantime, if you have any new symptoms in this area, let your doctor or nurse know at the appointment, and you may be offered the examination again sooner.

You can also go to your GP with symptoms, who may also offer you the same examination.

Self-examination

Some people also chose to perform DARE on themselves (self-examination).

- You only need to examine the anus – that's about 2cm from the opening.
- You are checking for any changes in the skin (new lumps, bumps, ridges or areas of roughness that weren't there previously)

You can ask your doctor or nurse for more advice on how to do this yourself.

If you notice any new changes you can see your doctor or nurse about these.

