Digital Rectal Exam

Printed from https://www.cancerquest.org/patients/detection-and-diagnosis/digital-rectal-exam-dre on 11/09/2026



Digital rectal exams (DRE) can be useful for the detection of abnormalities, including cancer, in the rectum. During the exam, the physician inserts a gloved, lubricated finger in the rectum and feels for abnormalities. In men, digital rectal exams are also used to detect changes in prostate that could indicate an abnormal condition, including cancer. The procedure is very quick and although it may be uncomfortable, it is usually not painful for the patient.[1], [2]

1 Abbas A, Yang G, Fakih M. (2010) Management of anal cancer in 2010. Part 1: Overview, screening, and diagnosis. Oncology (Williston Park). 2010 Apr 15;24(4):364-9. [PUBMED]
2 Jones MJ and Koeneman KS. (2008) Local-regional prostate cancer. Urol Oncol. Sep-Oct;26(5):516-21. [PUBMED]