

New Blood Test May Find Early-Stage Pancreatic Cancer [1]

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Researchers used a new blood test that correctly identified the presence of early-stage pancreatic cancer in two-thirds of patients participating in this study. The test detects a specialized protein, called PAM-4, in a person's blood. PAM-4 is a tumor marker, which is a substance found at higher than normal levels in the blood, urine, and body tissues of people with cancer. Developing a test for pancreatic cancer is important because patients have a better chance of survival when pancreatic cancer is found early. Currently, there is no test approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to detect and diagnose pancreatic cancer early.

This study included 602 patients who were divided into four groups: those with pancreatic cancer, those with cancers of nearby organs, those with noncancerous pancreatic conditions, and patients with no cancer. The test correctly identified the presence of pancreatic cancer in 76% of the patients. When the PAM-4 test was combined with a test for CA19-9, a tumor marker that is used to monitor whether pancreatic cancer treatment is working, this value increased to 85%. In addition, the test was able to accurately identify stage I pancreatic cancer in 64% of patients. The test was also more effective for finding pancreatic cancer than noncancerous pancreatic conditions, which means that it's less likely that these conditions could be mistaken for cancer when using this test.

What this means for patients

“Early detection, in addition to better treatments, is urgently needed for patients with pancreatic cancer,” said lead author David V. Gold, PhD, Director of Laboratory Administration and Senior Member of the Garden State Cancer Center in Morris Plains, New Jersey. “Pancreatic cancer symptoms are vague, and the disease tends to develop and grow silently. By the time it is detected, it has often spread to other parts of the body, making it nearly impossible to cure. These study results are extremely encouraging and may eventually lead to improved detection of the disease in people at high risk for pancreatic cancer.” [Learn more about the risk factors for pancreatic cancer](#) [2].

Questions to Ask Your Doctor

- What is my risk of pancreatic cancer?

- Can I reduce my risk of pancreatic cancer?
- What clinical trials are open to me?

For More Information

[Guide to Pancreatic Cancer](#) [3]

[Risk Factors and Prevention](#) [4]

Links:

[1] <http://www.cancer.net/new-blood-test-may-find-early-stage-pancreatic-cancer>

[2] <http://dev-cancernet.asco.org/publications-and-resources/cancer-advances/news-patients-asco-symposia/gastrointestinal-cancer-advances-news-2012-gastrointestinal-cancers-symposium/node/19498>

[3] <http://dev-cancernet.asco.org/node/19495>

[4] <http://dev-cancernet.asco.org/node/24868>