For more information, visit us at www.analcancerfoundation.org! To reach out to our staff, please email us at info@analcancerfoundation.org or call us at 646-593-7739 (US) or 0-207-993-5887 (UK).
**HPV (human papillomavirus).** Skin viruses consisting of more than 100 strains. Of these strains, 40 are sexually transmitted and about 13 of these can cause cancer. HPV can cause warts, RRP (recurring respiratory papillomatosis) and at least six cancers -- anal, cervical, oropharyngeal, penile, vaginal and vulvar. Frequently HPV goes away on its own, although for some it can remain dormant in the body for decades causing cancers to surface later in life. HPV can be either ‘high-risk’ or ‘low-risk’. High-risk HPV has the ability to cause certain cancers. Low-risk HPV is typically associated with warts.

**HPV Test.** A test that detects the presence of HPV DNA by looking for HPV DNA in cells. The test is only approved for women over the age of 30 in the US. This test is different from a pap test. Neither the pap test nor the HPV test determine whether or not cancer is present, but serve as a screening tool to see if HPV is present or the cells are abnormal.

**Immunotherapies.** An emerging intervention against cancer that seeks to harness the power of the individual's immune system. Currently, immunotherapies are being studied and used in clinical trials. They are not FDA approved.

**Malignant Melanoma.** A form of anal cancer that occurs in the cells of the skin of the anal lining responsible for pigment and makes up less than 2% of anal cancers.

**Medical Test.** A procedure to determine the presence or absence of an infection, disease or condition.

**Pap Test.** A screening tool where cells are collected and examined under a microscope to determine if there are abnormalities. These cells are viewed under a microscope. A pap test can be used on the cervix and/or the anus.

**Precancer.** The presence of abnormal cells or lesions that have the potential to turn into cancer. Precancer does not necessarily mean that cancer will occur. It is important to take the appropriate steps outlined by your healthcare provider after receiving a precancer diagnosis to try to avoid the development of cancer.

**Radiation Therapy.** A type of medical treatment that focuses a beam of energy on a specific part of the body to kill cancer cells and shrink tumors. Radiation can be used as the primary form of cancer treatment or with chemotherapy.

**Screening Test.** Tests used in the general population or in certain parts of the population who may be at higher risk for a certain disease to detect disease in its earliest form before it causes symptoms.

**Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI).** An infection that can be passed from one person to another during sexual intimacy. One does not need to have intercourse to catch and transmit HPV.
Squamous Cell Carcinoma. A cancer that develops from skin or skin-like cells. These cells also line the anus, mouth, vagina, vulva, cervix and penis. Most anal cancers are squamous cell carcinoma. Sometimes pathologists will use different names such as cloacogenic or basaloid carcinoma. These are just types of squamous cell carcinoma.

Vaccine. A medical treatment to prevent the occurrence of a disease or infection (prophylactic or preventative vaccines) or stimulate the body to fight an existing infection (therapeutic vaccine). There are two preventive vaccines for HPV, Gardasil and Cervarix. It is recommended that individuals receive the vaccine as early as possible to ensure its full immunization potential. All children in the US are recommended to get the HPV vaccine at ages 11 and 12, but individuals can get it up to the age of 26. In the UK, girls get the vaccine at ages 12 and 13 through the NHS and can receive it up to the age of 18.

These fact sheets were reviewed by an oncologist, an infectious disease doctor and nurse.