

Breath tests may allow for earlier detection of pancreatic cancer

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Axial CT image with i.v. contrast. Macrocystic adenocarcinoma of the pancreatic head. Credit: public domain

Pancreatic cancer carries a very poor prognosis as most patients are diagnosed at an advanced stage. Now a new *BJS* (*British Journal of Surgery*) study indicates that breath analyses may help detect pancreatic

cancer earlier, when curative treatments may be possible.

For the study, investigators examined [volatile organic compounds](#) in breath samples from patients with localized and metastatic pancreatic cancers, compared with patients with benign pancreatic disease and some with a normal pancreas. Tests identified 12 compounds that were indicative of [pancreatic](#) cancer. These compounds were from three main chemical groups, namely aldehydes, alkanes and alcohols.

"The final application of breath testing in the patient care pathway will depend on test sensitivity and specificity in large multicentre clinical trials, and its performance in early [pancreatic cancer](#) and high-risk groups," the authors wrote.

More information: *British Journal of Surgery* (2018). [DOI: 10.1002/bjs.10909](#)

Provided by Wiley

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