The Royal College of Pathologists
Pathology: the science behind the cure

Recommendation for the Working Group on Cancer Services on the use of tumour staging systems (October 2025)

TNM Classification of Malignant Tumours, 9th edition (or TNM 9) has recently been published by the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC).

There is close collaboration between the UICC, American Joint Committee on Cancer (AJCC) and the International Federation of Gynaecology and Obstetrics (FIGO) to maintain uniformity in cancer staging systems that are in worldwide use. However, there are some minor differences between UICC and AJCC TNM edition 9 for staging tumours in some sites. Where there is a difference, the preferred choice is UICC TNM (in alignment with the rest of Europe), unless there are specific clinical reasons to prefer AJCC TNM.

The Royal College of Pathologists is leading on the UK-wide adoption of the new UICC TNM9 cancer staging classification, effective 1 January 2026. Existing RCPath datasets will be updated with any changes to the staging system published in separate Appendices.

The aim of the RCPath will be to transition to TNM 9 (for all sites where transition is deemed appropriate) for patients diagnosed on or after 1 January 2026. The table below outlines the full list of dataset recommended staging system, and if it will use a staging system other than TNM 9.

If it is felt clinically necessary to implement the newer staging system locally ahead of any announcement, the advice is to give both the current staging system and the new staging system in the report. It is considered good practice to always state the staging system and version used in any report, and this will be particularly important during 2025 when there will be a transition period between staging systems.

It is recommended that pathology reports should always indicate which version (UICC or AJCC) and which edition (8 or 9) of TNM is being used.

Prof Sebastian Brandner
Chair of the Working Group on Cancer Services

Subspecialty	Recommended staging system	Comment
Breast	TNM 9	
Primary bone tumours	TNM 9	
Soft tissue sarcomas	TNM 9	
Cancer of unknown primary	n/a	
Central nervous system	Chang / TNM 9 where Chang is not available	
Adult adrenal gland	TNM 9	
Parathyroid	TNM 9	
Thyroid	TNM9	
Ocular retinoblastoma	TNM 9	
Conjunctival melanoma	TNM 9	
Uveal melanoma	TNM 9	Dataset under review
Anal	TNM9	
Appendix	TNM 9	
Colorectum	TNM 9	
Gastrointestinal neuroendocrine tumours	ENETs	Dataset under review
Gastrointestinal stromal tumours	TNM 9	
Liver	TNM 9	Dataset under review
Oesophagus	TNM 9	Dataset under review
Pancreas, ampulla of Vater and common bile duct	TNM 9	Dataset under review
Cervix	FIGO and TNM 9	Dataset under review
Endometrium	FIGO and TNM 9	Dataset under review
Ovary	FIGO and TNM 9	Dataset under review
Uterine Sarcoma	FIGO and TNM 9	Dataset under review
Vulva	FIGO and TNM 9	
Oral cavity	TNM 9	
Oropharynx and nasopharynx	TNM 9	Dataset under review
Nodal excisions & neck dissection	TNM 9	Dataset under review
Nasal cavities & paranasal sinuses	TNM 9	

Salivary gland	TNM 9	
Hypopharynx, larynx and trachea	TNM 9	
Lung	TNM 9	Dataset under review
Mesothelioma	TNM 9	
Thymic epithelial tumours	TNM 9	Dataset under review
Lymphoma	Ann Arbor – not collected in RCPath Dataset	Dataset under review
Renal tumours in childhood	SIOP	
Peripheral neuroblastic tumours	n/a	
Adnexal carcinomas and lymph nodes	TNM 9	Dataset under review
Basal cell carcinoma	TNM 9	Dataset under review
Malignant melanoma	TNM 9	Dataset under review
Merkel Cell carcinoma	TNM 9	
Invasive squamous cell carcinoma	TNM 9	
Primary cutaneous lymphoma	TNM 9	
Penis	TNM 9	
Prostate	TNM9	
Renal	TNM 9	Dataset under review
Testis	TNM 9	
Urinary collecting system	TNM 9	