
Second opinions

Summary

- You have the right to ask a doctor for a second opinion if you are unsure about your doctor's suggested medical treatment or a diagnosis.
 - Ask your doctor to give you a referral to another doctor or medical specialist.
 - Ask your doctor to send the other medical practitioner any test results or medical history.
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A second opinion is when you visit another doctor, medical specialist or healthcare professional to ask for their opinion. You can compare the medical advice and see if the second opinion is similar or the same as your regular doctor or specialist. This can give you confidence if both doctors agree or it can provide you with a different view, and you may get a more varied view of your healthcare condition and your medical options.

If you are not confident about a doctor's medical advice or diagnosis, you can seek a second opinion. You may ask for a second opinion if you are unsure about a diagnosis or medical treatment option, or if you just want to confirm that the planned treatment is your best option.

It may feel awkward to ask for a second opinion, but it is a common request. In some cases, you can make an appointment with a different doctor, specialist or healthcare professional without talking with the first doctor. However, it is best to ask your doctor for a referral, especially if they have your medical test results and records. These can help make it easier for the second doctor to make a diagnosis and recommend treatment. It may also save you from having to retake medical tests.

Getting a second opinion

If you want to get a second opinion:

- Explain to your doctor or specialist that you need to consider your options and would like advice from another doctor.
- Ask your doctor for a referral to see another doctor or specialist. You may have a certain person in mind, or you can ask your doctor for a recommendation.
- Ask your doctor to give your medical history, including test results and any scans, such as x-rays, to the referred doctor or specialist.
- For a health professional who does not require a referral from your doctor, you have the right to organise an appointment with another health professional without informing the first, if you wish. However, if possible, take any test results or scans with you.

After you receive a referral, it is important to make the appointment as quickly as possible, so you can understand your diagnosis options sooner and make a decision about your treatment quickly.

Making informed healthcare decisions

To make an informed decision about your healthcare, be honest with your healthcare team. If you have to undergo a treatment, surgery or take medication with concerning side effects, you have the right to ask about all your options and seek a second opinion if you want to.

An important part of being involved in your healthcare is learning how to make decisions and how to talk with your medical team. It may be that you want to get a second opinion because you do not understand your doctor's diagnosis or recommendations. It is fine to ask your doctor more questions and ask for a second opinion so you can fully understand your health issue and treatment options.

After seeking a second opinion and when you have all the information you need, you may feel more confident to make a decision about your treatment.

Where to get help

- Your doctor
- Healthcare team

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