

Why is it important to get a second opinion?

Even though doctors may get similar medical training, they can have their own opinions and thoughts about how to practice medicine. They can have different ideas about how to diagnose and treat conditions or diseases.

Some doctors take a more conservative, or traditional, approach to treating their patients. Other doctors are more aggressive and use the newest tests and therapies.

Additionally, many doctors specialize in one area of medicine, such as cardiology or obstetrics or psychiatry. Not every doctor can be skilled in every specialty.

Getting a second opinion from a different doctor provides patients and their caregivers with fresh perspectives and new information. It could also provide new options for treating a condition.

After getting a second opinion, a patient and his or her family can make more informed choices. Getting similar opinions from two doctors can provide a deeper understanding of the issue and treatment or opens up the opportunity to seek the insight of a third doctor before making any decisions.

When seeking a second opinion:

- Ask your doctor for a recommendation. Ask for the name of another doctor or specialist, so you can get a second opinion. Do not worry about hurting your doctor's feelings. Most doctors welcome a second opinion, especially when surgery or long-term treatment is involved.
- Ask someone you trust for a recommendation. If you do not feel comfortable asking your doctor for a referral, then call another doctor you trust. You can also call university teaching hospitals and medical societies in your area for the names of doctors. Some of this information is also available on the Internet.
- Check with your health insurance provider before seeking a second opinion. Ask if they will pay for this office visit. Many health insurance providers do. Ask if there are any special procedures you or your primary care doctor needs to follow.
- Ask to have medical records sent to the second doctor. Ask your primary care doctor to send your medical records to the new doctor. You need to give written permission to your current doctor to send any records or test results to a new doctor. You can also ask for a copy of your own medical records for your files. Your new doctor can then examine these records before your office visit.

- Learn as much as you can. Ask your doctor for information you can read. Go to a local library, search the Internet or find a teaching hospital or university that has medical libraries open to the public. If the information you find is difficult to understand or confusing, make a list of questions and take it along when seeing the new doctor.
- Do not rely on the Internet as the second opinion. When you get a second opinion, see a second doctor who can provide much more specific information about your unique situation than what can be found in research online. That doctor will perform a physical examination and perhaps other tests. The doctor will also thoroughly review your medical records, ask you questions, and address your concerns.

Resources

- Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality: www.ahrq.gov
- American Board of Medical Specialties: www.abms.org
- American Medical Association: www.ama-assn.org

Some content on this page was gathered from documents found on the website for the National Women's Health Information Center, United States Department of Health and Human Services: www.womenshealth.gov

Here when you need us.

Call: 800-858-6715

Online: guidanceresources.com

App: GuidanceNowSM

Web ID: SeattleEAP

©2024 ComPsych[®] Corporation. All rights reserved. This information is for educational purposes only. It is always important to consult with the appropriate professional on financial, medical, legal, behavioral or other issues. As you read this information, it is your responsibility to make sure that the facts and ideas apply to your situation.