



It Matters

Empowerment Pathways



Second Opinions: Two Heads are Better Than One

A second opinion is when a doctor other than your primary one reviews your medical chart and test results to give you a diagnosis and treatment recommendation. A second doctor's opinion may turn out to be the same as your primary or it may suggest a different approach or include additional recommendations. They might have an alternate explanation for your health problems or they may offer you a different treatment plan. Below are a few reasons why you should consider seeking a second opinion before making any treatment plan decisions.

FEEL EMPOWERED AND TAKE CONTROL

By seeking a second opinion, you will naturally become more informed about all of your available treatment options and even have a better sense of possible side effects of each. Many patients say that learning more about their condition and treatment helps you feel more in control of your health and ensure you are making the best decision for you.

CONFIDENCE AND PEACE OF MIND

A second opinion can help you feel more comfortable that you are choosing the right treatment plan and if both doctors agree on a course of treatment, you will feel extra confident in your plan.

YOU HAVE BEEN TOLD THERE ARE NO OPTIONS

If one doctor has said that your condition likely will not respond to treatment, or your choices are extremely limited, another doctor might be familiar with additional options unknown to the first and explore them with you. You have nothing to lose and everything to gain by seeking a second opinion.

FIND A DOCTOR YOU REALLY LIKE

Most doctors understand that patients have the right to a second opinion and often encourage it. You are under no obligation to be treated by the first doctor you see if you feel that another doctor better meets your needs. When meeting with a new doctor, pay attention to the nurses, office staff, and environment to make sure that you choose the best team for your treatment.

DISCOVER ALTERNATE TREATMENT OPTIONS

Not all hospitals and doctors have access to the same treatment options. A second opinion could lead you to a more advanced treatment or to one more tailored to your individual needs.

SECOND OPINION FEARS

Some patients may be concerned that the primary doctor will be offended if you decide to seek a second opinion.

A good doctor will understand that you will want to seek a second opinion and will encourage you to do so in order for you to feel comfortable and assured before starting treatment. Keep in mind that they would likely do so if they were in your position as a patient.

Honesty is important in your doctor/patient relationship, so it is a good idea to keep your doctor informed of your final choices of how to move forward with care.

Remember, if a doctor is insulted by your choice to get another opinion or pressures you in any way, they may not be the best choice to engage with in the future. Additional emotional stress between doctors and patients has been shown to keep patients from healing as fast as they could otherwise.

You may be concerned about insurance coverage of your second opinion appointment. Call your insurance company to obtain a list of in-network physicians, or find out the process for seeking an appointment out of your plan's network.

Today, a second opinion is very common and encouraged by doctors.

Learn more at patientadvocate.org/migrainematters

