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Seeking a Second Opinion

When you're facing cancer treatment, it's normal to wonder if another doctor could offer more information or a different treatment option. You might want to find another doctor who can look at your test results, talk with you about your personal situation, and maybe give you a different take on it. Getting a second opinion can help you feel more sure about your diagnosis and treatment plan.

- [Is there enough time to wait for a second opinion?](#)
- [Why get a second opinion?](#)
- [Remembering what your doctor says](#)
- [How to talk to your doctor about getting a second opinion](#)
- [The second opinion process: what to expect](#)
- [Deciding where to go for a second opinion](#)
- [Making sense of the second opinion](#)

comfortable with the request. If you are unsure of how to begin, here are a few ways to start the conversation:

value of a second opinion, and they are not offended when a patient wants one. They may even be able to recommend another doctor.

The following are some other possible resources for finding an oncologist:

- Local hospital, medical clinics or cancer centers
- [American Board of Medical Specialties](#)¹
- [American Medical Association](#)²
- [American College of Surgeons](#)³

Making sense of the second opinion

Although cancer patients seem to be asking for a second opinion more frequently, studies show the benefits of getting one are unclear. If the second opinion differs from the first, you may find the following tips helpful:

- Make an appointment with your first doctor to talk about the second opinion.
- Ask both doctors to explain how they arrived at their treatment plan
- Ask them how they interpreted your test results
- Ask what research studies or professional guidelines they consulted
- Ask what they have recommended to other patients in your same situation
- Ask if it is possible for the two doctors to review your case together
- You also might need to get 3rd opinion from another specialist— a pathologist, surgeon, medical oncologist, or radiation oncologist — to talk about the two opinions and give their opinion on your situation.
- You may need to do your own research on the latest treatment guidelines. Two good sources are the National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN) Treatment Guidelines (www.nccn.org⁴) and the National Cancer Institute's (NCI) PDQ® Cancer Treatment Summaries (www.cancer.gov⁵). Both are available in versions for health professionals (which use medical language and terminology) and patients (which use everyday language).

Hyperlinks

1. www.abms.org/verify-certification/certification-matters-service-for-patients-and-

[families/](#)

2. apps.ama-assn.org/doctorfinder
3. www.facs.org/for-patients/
4. www.nccn.org
5. www.cancer.gov

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