

GETTING A SECOND OPINION

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GETTING A SECOND OPINION

Getting a second opinion is standard medical practice these days. There are millions of surgical procedures performed in the United States every year and the majority of these operations are necessary for the health and well being of the patient. But, according to recent studies, a percentage of surgeries may be unnecessary.

Many people are now seeking second opinions, especially when it comes to elective surgery procedures. Also some insurance companies are encouraging second opinions for surgical procedures and more people than ever are beginning to take an active role in their health care options.

Based on all of the surgeries performed, one can conclude that overall we have a good system. However, we still hear of horror stories and botched operations from time to time, both in this country and around the world.

A second medical opinion can save you time and money, and it is possible that the condition in question can be treated by means other than surgery. Your doctor's approach to treating your condition is influenced by his training, experience, and exposure to new techniques. Getting a second opinion is standard medical practice, and you will find that most physicians welcome second and even third opinions. You can be candid and open with your physician about this as you tell him your feelings and how much more comfortable you'd feel getting another doctor's opinion.

If you decide to get a second medical opinion on a surgical procedure, you may wish to ask your doctor to refer a colleague or specialist. If you'd rather seek out another doctor yourself, you can take the matter up with your local medical society or area medical school.

When you go to a second doctor, tell him or her the name of the recommended surgical procedure and do over the various tests you have already had. This can save you the unnecessary expense of running duplicate medical tests. If the second doctor agrees that the surgery is necessary, he or she will usually send you back to the first doctor. If you make the decision to have the recommended surgery, there are a number of questions you may like to have answered such as from what medical school did the surgeon graduate, and in what specialty did the surgeon complete an accredited residency program. You might also want to inquire as to how many operations like yours the particular surgeon has performed and how many of those patients have required additional surgery.

A good indicator of a surgeon's competence is certification by the American Board of Medical Specialties. The letters F.A.C.S. (Fellow of the American College of Surgeons) after the surgeon's name is another sign of a surgeon's qualifications.

Once you are comfortable with your choice of a surgeon, find out what your options are. Ask about possible risks, complications and side effects, and the length of the recovery period. Talk to others who have had the same procedure. Also, don't forget to check with your insurance company to learn if the surgical procedure is covered under your policy, and if so, whether it is covered as in-patient or out-patient surgery. Remember, you deserve to be informed of all your

health care options, especially when it involves a surgical procedure.