

Lung and Chest Care Second Opinions: 5 Things You Need to Know

Some people choose not to seek a second opinion before deciding what medical treatment is right for them.

Common reasons include busy schedules, a desire to get medical treatment close to home, or simply not wanting to jeopardize an existing relationship with a primary care physician or specialist. But for those who do seek a second opinion, it can greatly change their treatment decisions.

When your lung and chest condition requires complicated treatments or major surgery, it makes sense to get another opinion. But how do you know if you should get a second opinion? And how do you get one? Here are things you need to know.

If your physician or advanced practice provider suggests non-emergency surgery or a major medical test, consider a second opinion.

You could benefit from a second opinion for any of the following reasons:

Your diagnosis is unclear

You've been told you have a rare or life-threatening condition

You have more than one medical problem

The recommended treatment is risky, controversial or experimental

You have a choice of treatments or medical tests that vary widely in cost

You're not responding to a treatment as expected

You have lost confidence in your care team

Your health plan requires a second opinion

"This program offers you potential treatments when your current options have been exhausted and a rapid assessment of whether you may be eligible for the state-of-the-art procedures at Northwestern Medicine."

Ankit Bharat, MD FACS
Chief of Thoracic Surgery
Executive Director
Northwestern Medicine Canning Thoracic Institute

"Getting a second opinion on a complex medical problem can help give clarity and guidance about the next steps."

Benjamin J. Seides, MD, MPH, FCCP

Interventional Pulmonologist

Regional Medical Director

Northwestern Medicine Canning Thoracic Institute at Central DuPage Hospital, Delnor Hospital and Kishwaukee Hospital

Start by talking to someone with at least the same level of expertise as your current physician or advanced practice provider.

Consider contacting a specialist or someone at an institution that specializes in your condition, such as Northwestern Medicine Canning Thoracic Institute. These specialty centers are more likely to have the latest technology and a team of experts to review your case.

Be honest and straightforward with your current physician.

Most physicians will acknowledge their patients' right to a second opinion. Be sure to ask for your medical records so you can share them with the team giving the second opinion. By law, your physician must give these records to you. You may have to pay to have copies made.

Most health insurance plans will pay for a second opinion.

Contact your insurance company before your appointment to find out for sure. In some cases, if you do not get a second opinion for a procedure, your out-of-pocket costs actually may be higher.

Come to your appointment, as well-informed and prepared as possible.

Research your condition and treatment options. This will make it easier for you to understand the conversation and ask helpful questions. Make sure the physician has gotten your medical records, including test results, or bring them with you to the appointment. If you can, bring a friend or family member, as they can help you remember important information. Bring a pen to take notes. And finally, ask questions — those that you write down ahead of time and those that come up during your appointment. You may find it helpful to bring the last page of this document to your second opinion appointment, as it contains a list of questions you may wish to ask.

"Getting a second opinion can help you feel more confident that you are choosing the right treatment plan for you."

Andrew Arndt, MD

Thoracic Surgeon

Regional Medical Director

Northwestern Medicine Canning thoracic Institute at Central DuPage Hospital, Delnor Hospital and Kishwaukee Hospital

The first place for a second opinion

How to get a second opinion at the Canning Thoracic Institute

Call 872.769.0467. We will help you schedule an appointment with a Canning Thoracic Institute physician. You will also get instructions on how and where to send your medical records.

Questions to ask the physician giving the second opinion

Physician's name: _____

Date of appointment: _____

1. Do you agree with my current diagnosis? _____

2. Do you recommend any additional tests? _____

3. What treatment options are available? _____

4. What are the risks of each treatment option? _____

5. How long will recovery take after each type of treatment? _____

6. What are the goals of the treatment? _____

7. What would happen if I waited or chose no treatment? _____

8. What treatment option do you recommend and why? _____

Notes: _____

