Article Series Lymphoma

Getting a second opinion when diagnosed with lymphoma

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When you have cancer, a second opinion can give you peace of mind. A second opinion may be especially helpful if you have lymphoma. With over 70 subtypes, and many different treatment options, an accurate diagnosis and different perspectives about treatment are really important.

Reasons to get a second opinion include:

- You have a rare type of lymphoma and want to be sure of your diagnosis.

- Your doctor gives you limited treatment options, and you think other treatments might be available at a different medical center.
- Your doctor is not a specialist in your type of lymphoma.
- Your doctor tells you there is uncertainty about your type or stage of cancer
- You're having trouble understanding and communicating with your doctor, or you want your options explained by someone else.
- You feel uncomfortable with your doctor and their ability to answer your questions or give you the time you need.
- Your insurance company asks you to get another opinion before you start treatment.
- You want to feel confident in your treatment plan.

How to ask for a second opinion

Some people may feel uncomfortable asking their doctor for a second opinion. It is important to remember that this is a common and completely normal request. Your doctor may even be able to assist you in finding another specialist.

If you are unsure how to request a second opinion, here are some ways to start the conversation:

- "I'd feel more confident starting treatment if I had a second opinion. Can you recommend someone?"
- "I know determining my subtype of lymphoma can be difficult and I'd like to get a second opinion. Will you help me with that?"
- "If you had my type of lymphoma, who would you see for a second opinion?"
- "I think that I'd like to talk with another doctor so I have peace of mind. Do you know anyone I can talk to?"

The second opinion process

- Start by checking your insurance policy to understand the coverage provided by your plan. Make sure that you know whether your plan will cover getting a second opinion. Sometimes, it can help if your doctor is the one to make the request.
- Let your current doctor know you would like to get a second opinion. Ask if it is okay to delay beginning treatment until you receive a second opinion.
- You will need to provide the consulting doctor a complete copy of all medical records, original x-rays, pathology materials, scans and reports. When setting

up an appointment, ask the office for a list of all the materials needed.
- A new pathologist will need to confirm your diagnosis by reviewing your tissue and blood samples. They will report the findings to the second opinion doctor which will be included in their consultation.

Deciding where to go for a second opinion

Your doctor may be able to help recommend another oncologist or treatment center for a second opinion. Your insurance company may also direct you where to go. Other ways to find a lymphoma specialist include:

- The Lymphoma Research Foundation's Helpline: 800-500-9976
- The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society Information Specialist: (800) 955-4572
- The National Cancer Institute Cancer Center locator

Remember, you are a part of your care team. If you feel the need to speak to a new doctor at any point in your lymphoma journey, you have a right to do so. Whether you are looking for confirmation on diagnosis, or for a treatment that is not being offered, you deserve the comfort of a second opinion and to feel confident in your plan.