

When in Doubt, Get a Second Opinion



The very first thing you should do if a doctor suggests surgery is to get the opinion of a second doctor. Programs to encourage patients to pursue other options have been established all over the country in an effort to curtail unnecessary surgery.

Ask your physician or someone else you trust to recommend a non-surgeon or another surgeon, not affiliated with the same hospital as your physician, who will review your case and offer an opinion. Generally, you should not submit to surgery on the basis of one medical opinion alone.

The following table indicates the percentage of surgeries not recommended by the physician giving a second opinion.

Results of Second Surgical Opinions

| <i>Surgery</i> | <i>Percentage Not Recommended on Second Opinion</i> |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Bunionectomy | 40 |
| Knee surgery | 40 |
| Hysterectomy | 35 |
| Prostatectomy | 35 |
| Deviated nasal septum surgery | 30 |
| Breast surgery | 25 |
| Dilatation and curettage (D & C) | 25 |
| Varicose vein surgery | 25 |
| Cataract removal | 23 |
| Tonsillectomy | 20 |
| Gallbladder removal | 10 |
| Hernia repair | 10 |

Always check with your insurance company to see if (and how much of) the cost of a second opinion will be covered. Most policies include this feature. If you have Medicare, call 1.800.MEDICARE (633.4227) for information on second surgical opinions.