



## A second opinion

The aim of this fact sheet is to explain why you might want to get a second opinion from a different cardiologist and how best to do this.

All parents want the best medical care for their child. If you have any doubts about the care or treatment your child is receiving, you may want to get a second opinion.

### Why ask for a second opinion?

Reasons for asking for a second opinion include:

- wanting another cardiologist to confirm the initial diagnosis;
- wanting another cardiologist's opinion on what treatment would be best for your child;
- wanting advice from a cardiologist who specialises in your child's condition;
- wanting your child to be operated on by a surgeon who works at a different unit;
- having concerns about some aspect of the care or treatment your child is currently receiving; or
- wanting your child to be treated at a centre that is easier for you to travel to.

### Your right to a second opinion

Whatever your reason, you are entitled to ask for a second opinion from a cardiologist at another PCU (paediatric cardiology unit) within the UK.

There is no legal obligation for a doctor to agree to your request for a second opinion. However, the British Medical Association (BMA) advises doctors to "respect a patient's wish to obtain a second opinion unless there are justifiable reasons for refusal, for example, that the patient might come to harm as a result."

### How to get a second opinion

The two main routes for getting a second opinion are shown below:

- Ask your child's GP to arrange an appointment with a cardiologist at a different paediatric cardiac unit.

Your child's GP will usually tell your original cardiologist that you are going to get a second opinion. This is important because the cardiologist giving the second opinion will need to see your child's medical notes.

- Ask your child's cardiologist. Many cardiologists will be happy to help you get a second opinion and will often suggest another cardiologist you can see.

Parents are often worried that their child's cardiologist will be insulted or upset by asking for a second opinion. Try to explain as clearly as possible why you would like a second opinion. You should also be aware that many doctors prefer the term further opinion to second opinion.

If your cardiologist does not want to agree to your request, you can discuss the situation with your GP.

The BMA advises doctors that "requests for a further opinion should always be handled sensitively... The patient should not be made to feel a nuisance or a 'bad patient'".

**Before you get a second opinion**

If you have concerns about the care your child is receiving, you may want to consider the following steps before asking for a second opinion.

- Raise your concerns with your child's cardiologist or cardiac liaison nurse.
- Contact the hospital's Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). Every hospital has a team like this that can help you with concerns or complaints.

**More information**

We can give you a list of PCU's and put you in touch with families whose children are treated at different units.

You may also find it useful to read our 'Talking to doctors' fact sheet, which includes advice on preparing for appointments and questions to ask the cardiologist.



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