

Please note that if for any reason you would value a second opinion concerning your diagnosis or treatment, you are entirely within your rights to request this.

The first step would usually be to discuss this with the doctor or other lead clinician who is responsible for your care.

Smoking is the primary cause of preventable illness and premature death. For support in stopping smoking contact **Smokefree Bristol** on **0117 922 2255**.

As well as providing clinical care, our Trust has an important role in research. This allows us to discover new and improved ways of treating patients.

While your child is under our care, you may be approached about them taking part in research. To find out more please visit: www.uhbristol.nhs.uk/research-innovation or call the research and innovation team on **0117 342 0233**.

For access to other patient leaflets and information please go to the following address:

www.uhbristol.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/information-for-patients/

Hospital switchboard: 0117 923 0000

Minicom: 0117 934 9869

www.uhbristol.nhs.uk



For an interpreter or signer please contact the telephone number on your appointment letter.



For this leaflet in large print, audio or PDF format, please email patientleaflets@uhbristol.nhs.uk.



University Hospitals Bristol **NHS**

NHS Foundation Trust

Patient information service
Bristol Royal Hospital for Children

Asking for a second opinion in paediatric cardiology



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A second opinion is when you ask another doctor or consultant for their opinion on your child's diagnosis and treatment. Usually this means asking a doctor from another hospital to see your child, or to review information about your child's diagnosis and recommended treatment.

Your multidisciplinary team (MDT) uses national treatment guidelines to decide the most suitable treatment for your child. Even so, you may want another medical opinion about the diagnosis or treatment. Anyone can ask for a second opinion. You can have one on the NHS so you don't have to pay, or you can choose to have one privately.

If you feel it will be helpful, you can ask your cardiologist to refer your child to another specialist for a second opinion. Getting a second opinion may delay the start of your child's treatment, so you and your doctor need to be confident that it will give you useful information.

The cardiac team will understand that from time to time someone may wish to have another opinion from either another consultant within the team or from another unit. It is common practice within the department to share clinical problems at our weekly multidisciplinary meetings for help in managing many of our more complex patients, or for your child's consultant to request a further opinion from another expert in the UK or further afield. Your child's consultant will always advise you if this is felt necessary, and they will seek your consent to share your child's details with another specialist at another institution before doing so.

How to get a second opinion

If you want a second opinion from a consultant, you can ask to see another consultant at Bristol Royal Hospital for Children or at another children's cardiac service elsewhere in the country. Your consultant will be happy to provide you with some recommendations, but ultimately it is up to you.

There are different ways of seeking a second opinion from a hospital consultant. You can ask your GP to refer you to another consultant, either on the NHS or privately (at your own cost), or you can ask your current consultant to refer you for a second opinion. People often worry that this will upset the specialist. However, many doctors, consultants or other specialists will be happy to refer you for a second opinion if it will be helpful.

Some people do their own research to find the name of a consultant they think they'd like to see. When you are referred for a second opinion, any relevant medical information will be sent to the new consultant or specialist. This information will include test results and any previous treatments.

If, after your second opinion, you want the second doctor or consultant to treat you, this will have to be formally arranged with them.

Preparing for your second opinion appointment

It can help to prepare for your appointment by thinking about what information you need from the appointment. You could write down some questions and take them with you. It can also help to have someone else go with you.

Difficulty getting a referral for a second opinion

If for some reason you find it difficult to get a referral for a second opinion, the LIAISE service may be able to help. You can contact them on **0117 342 8065**.

Possible disadvantages

Having a second opinion doesn't mean your child will be seen or treated more quickly than anyone else. In fact, your child's treatment may be delayed by waiting to see another consultant. The person you see for a second opinion will also need to get information from your first consultant, which can delay treatment. You may need to think carefully about having a second opinion if a delay is likely to be harmful to your child.

You may find it upsetting being told the same – or different – news about your child's diagnosis and treatment, especially if it's not what you were hoping for.

If your child is offered a different treatment, you may be asked to decide which treatment to have. Some people find this difficult and worry about whether they will make the right decision.

You may have to travel some distance to a different hospital to see another specialist and, if they recommend a treatment not available in Bristol or you would prefer for your child to be treated by them, you may then need to have your child's treatment at that hospital. This might not be easy for you or your family, and may mean you have extra travel costs.

Common reasons to ask for a second opinion

Your child's condition may be complex

You and your child's consultant may feel that there is more than one treatment option that may carry different risks and benefits. You may both feel that further information and another opinion may be helpful.

Your consultant wishes to obtain specialist advice about treatment not available within our team

This happens on a fairly regular basis for particular conditions that might require more rare procedures; for example, a heart transplant, which is only carried out in two children's hospitals in the UK.



You may have doubts about your child's diagnosis

Some people ask for a second opinion because they're worried that their consultant may have incorrectly diagnosed their child's condition. In this case, it's important to ask for a further appointment so that you can talk to your child's consultant or cardiac liaison nurse about any issues.

It may help to write down your concerns and share them when you meet. If you're unsure about any test results, remember you are able to ask for a written copy of them and for your consultant to explain them to you.

You may not understand the information you've been given

Consultants know that many people find it difficult to take information in when they are anxious or upset. You can always ask for another appointment so that you can go through the information again before going for a second opinion. Our nurse specialists work closely with our consultant team and can often take you through any information you have been given about your child's condition and treatment. It's also a good idea to take a relative or friend with you so they can help you remember what was said. Your consultant will provide you with a written summary of any meeting, and this will be shared with your GP and other healthcare professionals dealing with your child.

You may not be happy with the treatment that's been recommended

This could be because you've heard from somebody, read in a newspaper, or seen on the internet that another treatment is better. It's important to remember that your child may not have exactly the same condition that you have read or heard about. The same treatment may not be suitable for your child. That's why our consultant team plans treatment on an individual basis. If you're concerned about your child's treatment, please ask for a further appointment with your consultant or nurse specialist; you can talk to them about your concerns. They should be able to explain to you why they have recommended a particular treatment for your child.

You may not feel you can talk to your doctor or specialist about your diagnosis or treatment

Some people ask for a second opinion because they find it difficult to talk to a particular consultant. If you feel like this, try telling them that you're finding it hard to talk with them – often this can help.



Advantages and disadvantages of getting a second opinion

Before you decide whether you want a second opinion, you may want to think about some of the advantages and disadvantages.

Possible advantages

If both consultants are in agreement about your child's diagnosis and treatment, this will help you feel more confident about their decision.

You may find that you get on better with a different consultant and have more confidence in what they say.

Your child may be offered a treatment that hasn't been suggested before, or a newer treatment.

Your child may be offered a wider choice of treatments by the second consultant, so you can decide which treatment to have.