



braintumour
foundation

OF CANADA

For additional Information Sheets or to learn more about other brain tumour topics, visit www.BrainTumour.ca

Brain Tumour Foundation of Canada Information Sheets are provided as an informational and educational tool and are not intended to replace the advice or instruction of a professional healthcare practitioner, or to substitute for medical care. We urge you to seek specific medical advice on individual matters of concern.

Brain Tumour Foundation of Canada is generously supported by individuals, corporations and employee groups. It is through the tireless dedication of donors that help is available for anyone affected by a brain tumour, including patients, survivors and their loved ones.

Ask the Expert Information Sheet

Do I Need a Second Opinion?

Being diagnosed with a brain tumour is a difficult time and even after you have seen a specialist there may be some unanswered questions. Usually these questions will slowly be answered as treatment unfolds and you begin to seek a deeper understanding of your illness. However, you may feel that you would like an opinion from another expert in the field of brain tumours as you decide on the best treatment option(s).

It is important to keep in mind that there are many different brain tumours and opinions may vary regarding surgical, radiation and medical treatments. Standard treatments have been developed for certain types of tumours but for others, especially if a tumour comes back, (recurs) opinions and options for treatment may vary in different institutions. As well, the availability of clinical trials may vary from centre to centre.

In Canada, brain tumour experts generally know each other and communicate frequently via email and meetings. Many brain tumour treatment programs are based at university centres but groups dealing with brain tumour treatment are constantly interacting with each other to provide optimal patient care.

Your specialist or your family physician can refer you for a second opinion. However, keep in mind that this should be done in a manner that shows respect for care received and explain that you wish to explore the opinions of other experts in the field and not transfer treatment. In the end, however, you are responsible for making your own decision as to the care you feel is optimal for you and your family.

You may not need to actually see a physician as some can be contacted by email to give an opinion as an MRI scan can be either sent electronically or mailed as a CD. For a variety of reasons it is always a good idea to purchase your own personal copy of your scan from the film library in your hospital. Having a record of your clinical treatment, including pathology reports, to provide to the physician giving a second opinion is always beneficial.

Certainly you can seek input from physicians and others outside of Canada but keep in mind that the opinion and any treatment could be very expensive. The Canadian Health Act insures that all Canadians have universal health coverage and this includes receiving a second or more opinion(s) in this country. However, there are some differences between the provinces and territories and this can sometimes be difficult, but not impossible.

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you are **not** alone

Additional support, information and education offered by Brain Tumour Foundation of Canada:

Adult, Pediatric and Non-Malignant Brain Tumour Handbooks available in English and French.

"A Friend in Hope" children's storybook available in English and French.

20+ Adult Support Groups across Canada (in-person and virtual)

Toll-free information and support line

BrainWAVE Pediatric Support Program

Print BrainStorm Newsletter
Email Newsletters:
• E-BrainStorm
• Peace of Mind

"Grey Matters" Blog

If finances are blocking your access to seeking another opinion you may want to speak to your nurse, social worker or other member of your health care team for creative solutions. Service clubs in your area may be willing to assist you in your endeavour.

Having a brain tumour may be the most difficult problem you have ever faced. Listen to your health care team, read all you can, speak to other brain tumour patients and seek a second opinion if you feel it would help. Subsequently, you will be able to go forward confidently as an informed patient able to make educated decisions regarding your care.

*Thank you to **Pam Del Maestro**, a registered nurse in Montreal and one of the founders of Brain Tumour Foundation of Canada for generously offering her time to provide this important post-operative information.*

All patient resources are available free-of-charge in Canada. Call 1-800-265-5106 or visit www.BrainTumour.ca for additional details and information.



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foundation
OF CANADA

205 Horton St E
Suite 203
London, Ontario
N6B 1K7

📞 519.642.7755
1 [800] 265.5106
📠 519.642.7192
www.braintumour.ca

