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How to Learn More or Get a Second Opinion About Your Pathology Results

Pathology results often play a key role when making decisions about treatment, and many people understandably want to learn more about their test results.

- [Who should I ask about my pathology results?](#)
- [What if I need a second opinion from a pathologist?](#)

Who should I ask about my pathology results?

It is not common for the pathologist who analyzes a sample and writes the pathology report to meet directly with a patient. Instead, it is usually your oncologist (cancer doctor), surgeon, primary care doctor, or another doctor treating you who will explain the results to you. They know more about your overall situation and are also often best able to discuss the complex personal issues that might be affected by your pathology results.

It may help to go over the pathology report results with a member of your cancer care team. Ask them to explain your results in a way that you can understand, focusing on how the results might influence your treatment options and help predict your outlook.

Who has access to my pathology report?

If you see other types of doctors in the same center where your cancer was diagnosed, those doctors will also have access to the pathology report and other medical records.

If you see consulting doctors (such as for a [second opinion](#)¹) who practice at other facilities, you might need to send copies of your pathology reports and other medical records before your appointment. In most cases you can just sign a release form to

have the copies sent, but it's a good idea to keep an original copy for yourself to share with new doctors in case a report is not available. You'll always want to get back the original for those times you may need it again.

What if I need a second opinion from a pathologist?

If you or your doctors have any concerns about your pathology diagnosis, you can have your microscope slides reviewed by a consulting pathologist for a second opinion. Your oncologist or surgeon, or the pathologist who first looked at your biopsy or cytology sample, can often suggest a consultant with special qualifications in examining samples like yours. Or you can have your slides sent to the pathology department of a cancer center you have confidence in.

Some cancer centers where pathologists provide second opinions require that microscope slides of the patient's cancer be reviewed by their own pathologists. Some pathology labs will give copies of microscope slides to you if you are going to visit another cancer center for a second opinion or consultation. Other labs will mail the microscope slides (or send digital images via the internet) directly to the consulting cancer center's pathology department. Again, you'll probably have to sign forms to get this done.

Hyperlinks

1. www.cancer.org/cancer/managing-cancer/finding-care/seeking-a-second-opinion.html

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Written by

The American Cancer Society medical and editorial content team
(<https://www.cancer.org/cancer/acs-medical-content-and-news-staff.html>)

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