

You Probably Do This for Yourself, yet Ignore It for Your Pet

It doesn't often occur to pet parents to take this medical step for their pets, yet you probably do it for yourself. It can reverse a bad prognosis or save you money on a costly procedure. And who knows? Maybe you'll even end up with a much more collaborative vet.

Reviewed by [Dr. Becker](#)

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- It doesn't often occur to pet parents to seek a second veterinary opinion
- Situations in which it might be wise to consult another vet include when your pet receives a poor prognosis, if your pet isn't getting better after treatment or when an invasive or expensive procedure is recommended
- Another reason to seek a second opinion is when your vet's practice philosophy doesn't support your vision for your pet's health care
- Find an integrative or holistic vet who can help you formulate a nutritionally balanced, species-appropriate, excellent-quality diet for your four-legged family member
- If you find yourself getting frustrated with what your vet is recommending, that's your cue to look elsewhere for treatment

Editor's Note: This article is a reprint. It was originally published April 15, 2017.

It goes without saying that the veterinary care your furry family member receives is a very important factor in maintaining his or her health and quality of life.

But while many people seek a second medical opinion for their own health or the health of a (human) family member, it doesn't often occur to pet parents to seek a second veterinary opinion when it may be warranted.

Pet owners are encouraged to put together a veterinary care team to help create a healthy lifestyle for their companion animal. It's a great idea to team up with, say, an **integrative or holistic vet**, a pet nutritionist and/or animal chiropractor to help your pet live a long and healthy life.

If you have your own team of veterinary experts to consult, you can get a second opinion from someone you know and trust, who is also familiar with your pet. With that said, there are a number of situations in which you might want a second opinion for your pet.

9 Reasons to Seek a Second Veterinary Opinion

PetMD lists four situations in which you might want to get a second opinion for your pet:¹

1. **A poor prognosis is given** — If your pet has been diagnosed with a serious disease and you're told the outlook for recovery is poor, it's a very good idea to seek a second opinion from another veterinarian or veterinary specialist.

It's possible a different vet will have more experience with your pet's disease or more tools in his or her treatment toolbox than the first vet.

2. **A complicated or expensive treatment is recommended** — The standard treatment for some diseases, for example, cancer or orthopedic issues, is often complicated, invasive and expensive.

A specialist such as a veterinary oncologist or soft tissue surgeon may be able to offer a more targeted, less expensive treatment protocol.

3. **This is your first experience with the veterinarian** — If a new veterinarian sees your pet and you receive an upsetting diagnosis, prognosis and/or treatment plan, it's a good idea to get a second opinion to help put your mind at ease that what you learned from the new vet is (hopefully) accurate.
4. **Your gut says differently** — As the person who knows your pet better than anyone else, if you're sure something is up with her health but the vet can't find anything, seeking a second veterinary opinion may be a good idea.

Here are five additional reasons to seek out a second opinion (and/or a new veterinarian):

5. **Your vet is casual vaccinator** — The vast majority of traditional veterinarians recommend annual or every three-year re-vaccination schedules for dogs and cats.

Many are also advocates of the various non-core vaccines, which trigger more adverse reactions than the core vaccines.

Casual vaccinators also tend to downplay or disregard the potential for vaccine adverse events, so if your pet gets sick after being vaccinated, it's unlikely a traditional vet will make the connection.

If your vet is recommending annual boosters for core vaccines, or is pushing non-core vaccines without explaining your pet's individual risk for acquiring a particular disease, the efficacy of the vaccine or the potential for an adverse reaction, seek a second opinion with a vet who is more knowledgeable about vaccines and more cautious about giving them.

6. **Your vet doesn't offer vaccine titer tests** — Vaccine titer tests measure your pet's current immunity to diseases for which she's been vaccinated in the past. Any measurable positive result means your animal companion is protected.

Titer tests aren't routinely offered at most conventional veterinary practices, and when they are available, the cost is often excessive, especially when compared to the cost of a re-vaccination.

If your vet doesn't offer titer testing, or charges over \$100 for, say, a distemper and parvo titer test, consider finding another vet.

All holistic and many integrative vets prefer to titer test rather than automatically re-vaccinate against core diseases. The exception is rabies, which is the only vaccine required by law in all 50 states.

7. **Your vet prescribes multiple rounds of antibiotic and/or steroid therapy** — Unfortunately, many traditional vets hand out antibiotics and corticosteroids (e.g., prednisone) like candy.

In certain defined situations these drugs are both necessary and beneficial, but sadly, they are overused and abused in veterinary medicine.

If your veterinarian seems to believe these drugs are the answer for everything, especially if they're being used simply to quiet your pet's symptoms, seek a second opinion from a vet who will identify and resolve the root cause of those symptoms.

8. **Your vet believes your dog or cat should be eating a processed pet food diet** — Veterinary schools place very little emphasis on teaching animal nutrition, which means most vet students graduate with only the information they've been fed (pun intended) by pet food companies.

Unless your vet has done her own nutrition research, chances are she'll warn you away from raw diets and fresh whole food in favor of the processed stuff that comes in a bag or a can.

She might also sell the stuff she's recommending, as pet food companies offer incentives to vets to peddle their products.

If you're looking for informed guidance on the best diet for your dog or cat and your vet is advocating processed pet food, find an integrative or holistic vet who can help you formulate a nutritionally balanced, species-appropriate, excellent-quality diet for your four-legged family member.

9. **Your pet isn't getting better** — If your pet isn't getting better or is deteriorating despite treatment, it's time to try something else. The degree to which vets are determined to heal your pet varies from ultra-committed (meaning they will investigate new treatments and refer cases to their more experienced peers, if needed) to impartial and dispassionate (sometimes repeatedly re-prescribing medications that are clearly completely ineffective).

If you find yourself getting frustrated with what your vet is recommending, that's your cue to look elsewhere for treatment. This doesn't mean you can't return to this vet later, it just means your pet should not continue to suffer unnecessarily.

These are just a handful of situations in which you might want to seek out a second opinion for your pet, or a veterinarian whose practice philosophy is more aligned with your own ideas about the best way to care for your animal companion.

It isn't always easy or comfortable to "ruffle feathers" by getting a second opinion or leaving a veterinary practice you've gone to for years, but as your pet's primary caregiver and advocate, sometimes it's absolutely the best thing you can do for your furry best friend.

Sources and References

¹ [PetMD, November 7, 2016](#)
