

[What is a Neurosurgeon ?](#)

A Neurosurgeon is a specialist surgeon who has been trained in surgery on the spine and brain. They will generally perform such procedures as removal of brain tumours, and the management of some spinal conditions. Some will specialise and do such procedures as clipping of cerebral aneurysms. Others will specialise in something like spinal surgery.

[What is a Spinal Surgeon ?](#)

A Spinal surgeon is trained or has particular experience in spinal surgery. This means that not only will they do simple spinal procedures such as a micro-discectomy but will also do complex surgery such as a lumbar fusion. They can be either Neurosurgeons or Orthopaedic surgeons.

[What is the difference between an Orthopaedic surgeon and a Neurosurgeon and who should operate on your spine ?](#)

They are trained from a different base;

Orthopaedic surgeon do mostly bone type surgery; repair of fractures, joint replacements, joint surgery and spinal surgery. Neurosurgeons do surgery on the brain and the spinal cord and spinal surgery. Both would be able to manage your spine but it is important if you are having a major procedure to choose a Spinal Surgeon.

[How should you choose your surgeon ?](#)

In most cases your surgeon will be recommended to you by your local doctor. If someone you know has had a good result from surgery they may recommend a surgeon to you. It is important to choose a surgeon who has experience in the problem that you need treated.

[Where can I find another surgeon ?](#)

See [HOW TO FIND A SURGEON](#)

[How do I know if my surgeon is any good ?](#)

You don't! If he is recommended by you local doctor ask what he is like. Ask the surgeon about his experience and outcomes with your type of problem.

[Will my surgeon be offended if I ask for another opinion ?](#)

No he should not be. You would always do your research before buying a TV why not do it for your spine.

[Should I get a second opinion about surgery or treatment ?](#)

If you are happy with what is explained and what needs to be done then No. If you feel that you are about to do something that you do not want to or that does not make sense then another opinion may be appropriate.

[How much could the surgery cost ?](#)

This will depend on a number of things.

If you have private health insurance it will depend on: the level of cover that you have/any excess for you company and the hospital you are going to/out of pocket for the surgeon above your insurance/out of pocket for the anaesthetic.

[If I Have no Insurance and have my surgery in a public hospital will it cost me any thing ?](#)

There should be no costs in having surgery in a public hospital.

[If I Have Private Insurance am having my surgery in a public hospital will it cost me any thing ?](#)

It should not, there would be very few hospitals or surgeons that would charge out of pocket to a patient having surgery in the public hospital.

[If I have private insurance would it be normal to have an out of pocket expenses and to whom ?](#)

Most surgeons will charge an out of pocket expense for spine surgery. There is nearly always an out of pocket to the anaesthetist and there may be charges for the surgical assistant.

[What are normal consultation costs in victoria ?](#)

The initial fee would be around \$150 with a rebate from medicare of \$62.95 and a review would be about \$80 with a rebate from medicare of \$31.60

[What is a normal surgical out of pocket cost ?](#)

For most procedures you should not expect to be out of pocket more than about \$800.

[Is the more expensive surgeon better ?](#)

As in all things different people charge different amounts. Some excellent surgeons may only charge the no gap fee. Other very junior inexperienced surgeons may charge enormous out of pocket fees. There is no doubt that for some procedures where the amount allowed by medicare is small that there should be a significant out of pocket fee. You should judge your surgeon on experience and results and not how much they charge.

[Why is there an out of pocket cost ?](#)

The government when they brought in medicare costed surgical procedures at a reasonable fee structure. The raising of these fees has not kept up with the CPI or cost of living. In real terms they are a long way behind the current needed fee structure. The figure that they have set is the rebate. Anything above that you have to pay.

[Are there a list of questions should ask my surgeon ?](#)

Yes go to [WHAT TO ASK YOUR SURGEON](#)

[What if I do not like my surgeon ?](#)

Ask yourself why and if it cannot be resolved find another one.

[What if I think my surgeon does not like me ?](#)

This may be a misconception and some times you do not hit it off immediately. If you feel that it is a problem seek a further opinion as it is important for both parties that you get on.

[Am I better to have my surgery in a public hospital even though I have private insurance ?](#)

There used to be the perception that private care was not as good as public if you are very sick. This is no longer the case. The level of care in some major private hospitals is as good if not better than some public hospitals. If you have private insurance and have surgery in the public hospital you are taking away a bed for someone less fortunate than yourself. Where possible it is better to have it done in a private hospital.

[Are all private hospitals the same ?](#)

No there are different levels of private hospitals. More complex procedures such as neurosurgery and cardiac surgery are done in the bigger central hospitals that have an intensive care unit. The smaller centres will do general surgery and plastic surgical procedures.

[Is it worthwhile to travel a long distance to see someone and to have surgery ?](#)

In America where there are centres of expertise in a particular field it is common to cross the country for medical treatment. If you have good local resources for treatment then there is no need to travel. If you are looking for the best and they cannot travel to you then you will have to go to them. The question is what value do you put on your treatment.

[I would like to have my surgery close to home what are the options ?](#)

If you have seen someone a long way from home then talk to your local doctor and see what is available. Neurosurgery is only available in the main central cities in Australia. If you are in the city and you need to cross town it is not for long and it may be that you need to do this to get the most appropriate person to treat you.

[I am confused about the surgery what do I do ?](#)

Look it up on the internet as you are doing but seek a further professional opinion as you must be totally clear as to what you are having and why it is needed.

[Can I ask my Local Doctor to refer me to someone different to whom he suggests ?](#)

Yes. Your Local Doctor will choose to send you to someone that he knows or has dealt with before. If you have found some one you would prefer to see then he should be happy to send you there.

[My physio wants me to see another person is this OK ?](#)

Yes. Your Physio will see the results of surgery and will have an idea about the success of it. They will also have an idea if the surgery can be postponed or even avoided.

[I am not ready yet to have the surgery can I wait ?](#)

This will depend on the surgery required and the reason for it. If you have severe compression on the spinal cord or cauda equina then it may be urgent. If you have had symptoms for a long time and they have not changed recently you may be able to wait. It is best to ask this of your surgeon.

[I don't want to have the surgery but the surgeon says I have no choice ?](#)

If you have no option to have the surgery then you should proceed. You are clearly not sure what to do so it would be important before you proceed to seek a further opinion in case there is an other option from some one else.

[I have been told I need the surgery tomorrow is this true ?](#)

There are some cases where the surgery must be done very quickly or immediately. These usually involve situations where you have cancer or there is severe compression of the spinal cord or cauda equina. Usually you will be in a lot of pain or have weakness or numbness in your arms and or legs. If there is some urgency it is normally fairly obvious and your surgeon should be able to explain this to you. If you feel you are being pushed into something you do not want to do then it may be prudent to seek another opinion.

[How do I find out how much I will be out of pocket from the hospital stay and from my health fund ?](#)

Ask your surgeon to provide you with a quote from your hospital and ask your fund to tell the rebate for the surgeons fees. This will be an estimate.

[Can I choose my anaesthetist ?](#)

Good surgeons will usually have good anaesthetists. Most surgeons use the same ones and do not swap between cases. If you have someone that you want to use discuss this with your surgeon. The Surgeon and anaesthetist usually work as a team and your surgeon may not have had experience in working with your anaesthetist.