Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

About the Clinical Decision Unit at MSK

This information explains what to expect in the Clinical Decision Unit (CDU) at Memorial Sloan Kettering (MSK).

What is the CDU?

The Clinical Decision Unit, also known as the CDU, is the observation unit of the Urgent Care Center (UCC). It's where you can have short-term treatments and tests in a safe, comfortable place. The CDU is located near the UCC.

You must wear masks in the Clinical Decision Unit. Please see our Visitor Policy for the latest updates on our masking rules.

Why am I in the CDU?

Your UCC healthcare provider decided that a short stay in the CDU is the best way to care for you. Common reasons people are cared for in the CDU include chest pain, trouble breathing, abnormal blood work, fever, dizziness, fainting, and pain.

Who is involved in my care?

Your CDU team includes healthcare providers from different specialties:

- Doctors
- Advanced practice providers (nurse practitioners and physician assistants)
- Registered nurses
- Nursing assistants

Other healthcare providers may consult in your care and discharge planning.

How long will I be in the CDU?

It depends. We expect you'll stay between 6 hours and 24 hours. Ask a member of your CDU team about your plan of care.

Will I be able to eat?

It depends. If it's safe for you to eat, we will give you a light meal.

What happens if I'm admitted?

You will stay in your CDU room until your inpatient (hospital) bed is ready.

What about my medicines?

We will review the medicines you take at home and give you the medicines you need. If you have any of your medicines with you, ask your healthcare provider if you should take them.

Will my primary MSK doctor know I'm here?

Yes. Your healthcare provider will be in contact with your primary MSK doctor.

What should I expect while I'm in the CDU?

Your healthcare providers from the CDU and UCC will coordinate your care with your primary MSK doctor. We will also closely monitor your:

- Heart rate
- Blood pressure
- Breathing
- Temperature
- Pain level
- Blood tests

You may have tests and treatments depending on what you need, such as intravenous (IV) medications, blood transfusions, or X-rays.

What happens when I'm discharged?

We will give you instructions explaining what you should do next. If you're discharged and prescribed new medications, we will give you a prescription or fill it for you at our pharmacy.

When is the CDU open?

The unit is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

How will I be billed for my care in the CDU?

Your observation stay will be billed as an outpatient service (under Medicare this will be under Part B). This is different from inpatient (hospital) admissions. They are billed under inpatient services (under Medicare this would be under Part A). If you have any questions, call Patient Financial Services at 212-639-8242.

Clinical Decision Unit
Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center
1275 York Avenue, New York, NY 10065
T 212-639-2790
F 929-321-1504

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

About the Clinical Decision Unit at MSK - Last updated on April 23, 2026

All rights owned and reserved by Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center