

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

About Handoff

This information explains what handoff is and how you can take part in handoff. In this resource, the words “you” and “your” refer to you or your child.

What is handoff?

Handoff is when one part of your care team passes your health information to another part of your care team. For example:

- When your nurse’s shift is over, they will give the next nurse who’s caring for you an update on your health and plan of care.
- After you see a specialist, they will give your primary physician (main doctor) an update about what happened during your visit.

Handoff helps make sure everyone is up to date on how you’re feeling and what’s going on with your care.

Handoff can happen at any point in your care. It only takes a few minutes. You may have a handoff more than once during your care.

Handoff does not replace the other conversations you and your healthcare providers have. Your healthcare providers will still talk with you to see how you’re doing and give you updates about your care.

What happens during handoff?

Your care team will do many things during handoff, such as:

- Introduce themselves to you and anyone with you.
- Invite you to take part in the handoff. If you want anyone else to take part, tell your team.
- Talk about your health, including why you’re being seen and what’s going on with your care.
- Review your medical chart.
- Check the medicines you’re taking.

- Look at your intravenous (IV) lines, equipment, bandages, and other things important for your care.
- Talk about any tests you had.
- Talk about your plans for discharge or care at home.
- Encourage you to ask questions and share your concerns.
- Ask you about information you want passed on to your next care team.
- Ask you about your care goal so it's included in your plan.
- Ask you about any special needs.

What should I do during handoff?

During handoff, you can ask questions and share information with your healthcare team. You can:

- **Listen.** You're an important part of your care team. We want to make sure you have all the information about your care and that you get the information right away.
- **Speak up.** If you have questions, handoff is a good time to talk about them.
- **Ask questions.** If your care team uses words or shares information you don't understand, it's OK to ask them to explain it.

It's very helpful for you to take part in handoff. This is one way you can be a partner in your care and help make sure you get the best care possible.

If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

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

About Handoff - Last updated on April 29, 2025

All rights owned and reserved by Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

Last Updated

April 29, 2025

Learn about our [Health Information Policy](#).

Tell us what you think

Tell us what you think

Your feedback will help us improve the educational information we provide. Your care team cannot see anything you write on this feedback form. Please do not use it to ask about your care. If you have questions about your care, contact your healthcare provider.

While we read all feedback, we cannot answer any questions. Please do not write your name or any personal information on this feedback form.

Was this information easy to understand?

Yes

Somewhat

No

What could we have explained better?

Please do not write your name or any personal information.

Submit