



PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Geriatrics

This information explains geriatrics, or the care of older adults, at Memorial Sloan Kettering (MSK).

As adults get older, they begin to have different medical needs than younger adults. Geriatrics focuses on the care of older adults. The doctors who care for them are called geriatricians. Geriatricians know the difference between diseases and the normal effects of aging.

Your geriatrician can help you with health issues, such as:

- Having many medical problems
- Taking medications that could interact with each other
- Problems with walking or falling
- Incontinence (not being able to hold in your urine or bowel movements)
- Constipation (having fewer bowel movements than usual)
- Insomnia (trouble falling or staying asleep)
- Memory problems
- Unexpected weight loss
- Depression or anxiety
- Loneliness
- Elder abuse or neglect

Your Geriatric Team

Your geriatrician will coordinate your care with your other healthcare providers at MSK. They will also work with other healthcare providers (HCPs) who specialize in geriatrics to manage your medical needs. This team will include the people who are currently caring for you, such as your oncologist (cancer doctor), and other HCPs such as:

- Nurse practitioners (NPs), who can review your health history, do a physical exam, and prescribe medications.
- Registered nurses, who can assess your healthcare needs, make a care plan, and help you carry out your care plan.
- Social workers, who can help you with many things, including:
 - Understanding the aging process.
 - Coping with stress.
 - Issues related to health insurance, housing, transportation, and other services.
- Dietitians, who can help you make healthy choices about food and nutrition.
- Physical therapists, who can help you maintain and restore function and mobility (ability to move).
- Occupational therapists, who can help you regain the skills you need for everyday living.
- Pharmacists, who can help you with your medications. They can help you follow your medication schedule, identify side effects, and help you avoid medication interactions.
- Psychiatrists, who can help you manage your emotional needs.

If you have any questions, talk with your geriatrician. If you don't have a geriatrician, ask your healthcare provider at MSK for a referral.

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.

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