Ordering a Private Duty Nurse or Companion

This information describes the role of a private duty nurse or companion and explains how you arrange for one at Memorial Sloan Kettering (MSK).

You may want to learn more about having a private duty nurse or companion. Sometimes, your doctor may recommend it. Other times, your family will want one for you. Patients and families tend to want this special attention if:

- You have had a big surgery or procedure.
- You are confused at times. This can happen from some medications.
- You are at risk for falling.

Who are the private duty nurses or companions?

Registered nurses are called RNs. Companions are nursing aides. Both provide private duty services.

Private duty nurses at MSK are RNs who are licensed to practice nursing in New York State. They will provide all of your nursing care. They give medications and treatments and change dressings. They will report your progress to your doctor and primary nurse.

Companions have completed a Nursing Health Training Program. They assist patients in activities of daily living. These include bathing, changing your linen, and helping during meals.

Is the hospital responsible for the care given by the private duty personnel?
The hospital approves the credentials and qualifications of the private duty personnel. The RNs and companions are not employed by the hospital, but they are expected to adhere to the hospital’s policies and procedures.

**Where do I go to make the arrangements?**

The Private Duty Office is in room 106 on the first floor of the Howard building (H-106). It is open every day from 8:00 AM to 8:30 PM. The office is closed between 1:30 PM and 2:30 PM daily.

**How much does it cost?**

Ask the staff at the Private Duty Office what the fee is for a private duty companion. The fee for a private duty RN is negotiated by the RN and family.

**Whom do I pay?**

You pay the person providing the service.

**Will I be reimbursed?**

Check with your insurance company before you order private duty. Ask what type of service will be reimbursed. Ask if you need a doctor’s order. Do not assume that your insurance company will pay for these costs.

**What time do they work?**

They usually work days from 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM. Nights are from 7:00 PM to 7:00 AM.

**How much time before I need the nurse must I order his or her services?**

The receptionist in the Private Duty Office needs at least 3 hours to process the request. If the request is made less than 3 hours before the time you wish the RN or companion to begin, he or she may be late. If you wish to cancel the order, you must do so by 5:00 PM or 5:00 AM.

**How do I arrange to have continued care for**
myself or my loved one?

You may continue the service by telling the person to come until further notice. You must inform the Private Duty Office by calling 212-639-6895 that you have done so. You may also call the Private Duty Office and request that the service be continued. If there is a break and you wish to resume service, you must authorize it with your signature.

If I am not satisfied with the private duty person, can I ask for someone else?

If for any reason you and the person caring for you or your loved one cannot get along, call the Private Duty Office and request a change.

If you have any questions, speak with the nurse leader on the unit or call the Private Duty Office at 212-639-6895.

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