Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Presurgical Medical Assessment for Seniors

This resource explains what to expect before and during your presurgical medical assessment with your geriatrician at MSK.

About geriatrics

As adults age, they begin to have different medical needs than younger adults. Geriatrics focuses on the care of mature adults. The healthcare providers who care for them are called geriatricians.

About your presurgical medical assessment appointment

You'll have an appointment with a geriatrician before your surgery. Your surgeon may refer you for this appointment for any of these reasons:

- You're a mature adult.
- You may have other health conditions.
- You're taking more than one medicine, including a blood thinner.
- You have abnormal test results.

There may be other reasons for their referral.

Your surgeon's assistant will schedule this appointment for you. They'll tell you the exact date, time, and location of your appointment.

Your appointment will be like a physical exam. You and your geriatrician will:

- Talk about any health conditions you may have, such as:
  - High blood pressure
  - Lung or breathing issues
  - High cholesterol
  - Heart disease
  - Diabetes
  - Alzheimer's disease (disease of the brain that causes memory loss)
- Review the medicine you take. This includes prescriptions, supplements, over-the-counter medicine, and blood thinners.
- Identify any problems that you may have during your surgery.
- Plan any care you need to reduce your risk of these problems.

Your appointment will take at least 1 hour.

Your geriatrician may need more information about your medical history, previous tests, or both. If so, they may talk to your primary care provider or other specialists outside of MSK.

All your test results and notes from your healthcare providers are in your electronic medical record at MSK. Your surgeon and other healthcare providers at MSK can see this information to help plan your care.

Getting ready for your appointment

Your geriatrician's assistant will call you 24 to 48 hours before your appointment to confirm the appointment. They'll also ask you for contact information for your primary care provider and other specialists outside of MSK.

An office coordinator will ask you to complete an Electronic Rapid Fitness Assessment (ERFA) form before your visit.

What to do the day of your appointment

You can eat and take your medicines as usual the day of your appointment.

What to bring

- A list of all the medicines you're taking. This includes patches, creams, vitamins, supplements, or natural or home remedies. Write down the doses and how often you take each one.
- Any recent test results from outside of MSK.
- Contact information for your primary care provider and other specialists, if you haven't already given it to your geriatrician already.

What to expect when you arrive

Many staff members will ask you to say and spell your name and birth date. This is for your safety. People with the same or similar names may have an appointment on the same day.

Meet with a nurse

Your nurse will measure your blood pressure, temperature, breathing rate, and heart rate. They will ask you questions about your medical history, any medicine you're taking, and any symptoms that you may have.

Meet with your geriatrician

Your geriatrician will review the information taken by your nurse. Then, they will:

- Do a physical exam.
- Go over any problems that could happen during or after your surgery.
- Tell you what you and your caregiver can do to decrease your risks.
- Tell you which medicines you can take until the morning of your surgery.
- Do a basic fitness test and a basic memory test called a Mini Cognition Exam.
- Decide if you need any more tests before your surgery. Your care team will tell you when these tests will be scheduled and how to get ready for them.

After your appointment

If you have any questions about what was discussed during your appointment, talk with your geriatrician. If you have any questions about your surgery, talk with your surgeon.

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.

Presurgical Medical Assessment for Seniors - Last updated on September 28, 2026
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