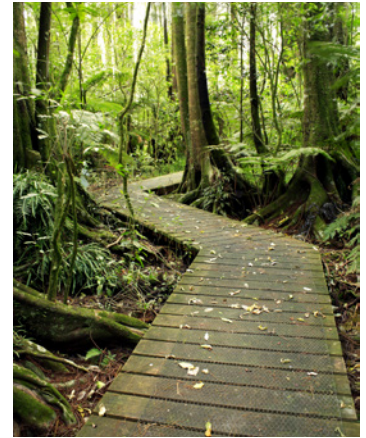


# Medical Assistance In Dying

Seeking medical assistance in dying is a deeply personal decision. You are encouraged to discuss your wishes with your family members, your loved ones and/or anyone else who can support you. It is normal to have questions. It is important to note that not every person who inquires about medical assistance in dying will be eligible. Of those who are eligible, some will proceed with the process while others will decide at some point to explore other options.

Whatever you decide, your health care team is here to give you the care you want and to honour and respect your wishes.

Your health care team's focus is to provide services and supports that meet your needs and preferences.



## What is medical assistance in dying?

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Medical assistance in dying is a process whereby a doctor or nurse practitioner helps a patient who wants to voluntarily and intentionally end their life, involving drugs that can be taken by mouth or given intravenously. Medical assistance in dying is now legal in Canada and is governed under federal law. This law, passed in June, 2016, sets out the eligibility requirements and processes under which medical assistance in dying can be provided to a patient.

## Who is eligible to receive medical assistance in dying?

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To receive medical assistance in dying, you must meet all of the following criteria:

- Be at least 18 years old,
- Be eligible for publicly-funded health services in Canada,
- Request assistance without pressure or influence from anyone else,
- Be able to provide capable informed consent throughout the process, including at the final moment when medical assistance in dying is to be provided,
- Have a grievous and irremediable medical condition (illness, disease or disability),
- Be suffering intolerably from this condition,
- Be in an advanced state of decline that cannot be reversed,
- Be at the point with your condition where natural death is reasonably foreseeable.

If you believe you meet these criteria and want to find out more, please talk to the doctor or nurse practitioner who is most responsible for your care. You can ask any member of your care team to bring your request to the attention of your doctor or nurse practitioner.

Please understand that doctors and nurse practitioners are not obligated individually to help you with this process if they do not personally agree with it, **but they will connect you with other care providers who can help you.**

## **What is the process to consider medical assistance in dying?**

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Your doctor or nurse practitioner will discuss your medical condition with you. They will make sure you have considered all the services or treatments that are available to you. These may include comfort care, pain control, hospice care, palliative care or other options. You are not required to accept any of these services, but it is our responsibility to ensure that you know about them before you pursue medical assistance in dying. **Should you choose to go ahead with medical assistance in dying, please know you can change your mind and stop the process any time.**

## **Patient requests**

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Once you have discussed medical assistance in dying with your care providers and others you choose to involve and have made the decision to proceed, a written Record of Patient Request must be completed. By signing the form, you are formally asking for medical assistance in dying and stating that you believe you meet the criteria. You can get this form from your doctor or nurse practitioner. **You may withdraw your request at any time.**

## **Assessments**

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The Assessment process ensures that you are aware of other options, that you meet the criteria for medical assistance in dying and that you are capable to make this important decision. Two different practitioners (doctors and/or nurse practitioner) must each do separate assessments. If they are not sure whether you are capable of making the decision, a medical professional with expertise in capability assessment may also be consulted.

## **Period of reflection**

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If the assessment shows you are eligible for medical assistance in dying, federal law requires a 10 day 'period of reflection' before medical assistance in dying can take place. This period begins when you complete the Record of Patient Request. The waiting period can be shortened in certain circumstances. You and your doctor or nurse practitioner make this decision together.

## **Where can medical assistance in dying take place?**

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During the period of reflection, if you are receiving care in a Vancouver Coastal Health program your health care team will work with you to decide where medical assistance in dying will take place. The team will help you arrange support or other services to make you as comfortable as possible.

You may choose to receive medical assistance in dying in your own home or, if you are currently in a facility setting, in that setting. You can also decide if you would like anyone with you when medical assistance in dying is administered.

### **For more information about medical assistance in dying, visit:**

Vancouver Coastal Health: [www.vch.ca/assisted-dying](http://www.vch.ca/assisted-dying)

Health Canada: <http://healthycanadians.gc.ca/>

### **For further discussion, you or your doctor or nurse practitioner may contact VCH:**

Phone: 1-844-550-5556

Email: [assisteddying@vch.ca](mailto:assisteddying@vch.ca)

For more copies, go online at <http://vch.eduhealth.ca>  
or email [phe@vch.ca](mailto:phe@vch.ca) and quote Catalogue No. **GV.160.A88F**

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The information in this document is intended solely for the person  
to whom it was given by the health care team.

[www.vch.ca](http://www.vch.ca)