



# Medical Assistance in Dying

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Informational Brochure

Medical assistance in dying is one of a number of choices that can be considered in end-of-life care.

End-of-life care planning is very personal, and is designed to ensure that you and your family are treated with dignity, being respectful of your personal values and beliefs.

Patients will receive high-quality palliative and supportive care throughout the process of requesting medical assistance in dying or any approach to end-of-life care.

Your care provider is available to discuss end-of-life care planning with you.

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HOSPITAL SITE**

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## **WHAT IS MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING?**

Medical assistance in dying is a term used to refer to patients seeking and obtaining the assistance of a doctor to end his/her life. A doctor administers medications to the patient that ends the patient's life.

## **DO I QUALIFY FOR MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING?**

You may qualify if you meet **all** of the following criteria:

- Eligible for health services funded by a government of Canada
- At least 18 years of age
- Capable of making decisions about your health care
- Suffer from a serious and incurable illness, disease or disability
- Give informed consent in writing
- Be in a state in which “natural death” has become reasonably foreseeable, taking into account all of your medical circumstances without a prognosis necessarily having been made as to the specific length of time that you have remaining

## **WHERE CAN MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING OCCUR?**

This procedure can occur in a location of your choosing (e.g., at home, at the cottage, in the hospital). Developing your end-of-life plan is very personal. It is important to consider details like where you wish to die, the way in which you wish to die, who you would like present for your death, whether you wish to have your pet(s) present, whether you wish to have music playing or someone reading to you, and how you would like your loved ones supported following your death.

## **CAN I REQUEST MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING FOR MY LOVED ONE?**

No. Requests for medical assistance in dying must come from a capable and competent adult without pressure from others.

## **WHO CAN DECIDE THAT THEY WANT MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING?**

Requests must be made by a competent adult who meets all of the eligibility criteria. Substitute Decision Makers, Powers of Attorney and/or family members cannot make this decision. Advance directives cannot be used to request this procedure.

## **HOW DO I REQUEST MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING?**

A member of the health care team can provide you with the Patient Request for Medical Assistance In Dying form. This form must be filled out and signed by the patient requesting the procedure.

You will then undergo two independent assessments by either doctors or nurse practitioners who will determine if you are eligible for medical assistance in dying.

## **WHAT HAPPENS TO ME WHEN I CHOOSE TO HAVE A MEDICALLY-ASSISTED DEATH?**

A few hours before undergoing the voluntary procedure, and if you do not already have a vascular access port, you will have two intravenous catheters placed into two of your veins. At the time of the procedure, the doctor or nurse practitioner will administer medications that will make you fall asleep and ultimately stop your heart and stop your breathing.

## **WHAT IF I DECIDE I DON'T WANT TO END MY LIFE THROUGH MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING?**

At any point in the process, and prior to the administration of the medication, you can withdraw your consent to proceed with medical assistance in dying.

## **WHAT IS CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION?**

When a member of the health care team, due to matters of personal conscience, chooses not to participate in medical assistance in dying it is known as conscientious objection.

MAHC fully respects this personal choice.

The level of comfort and support a team member may or may not be willing to provide could vary. For example, they may be comfortable providing you with this educational pamphlet, or having an exploratory discussion with you, or providing a second medical opinion, but are not willing to prescribe, provide, or administer the medications required.

While some doctors or nurse practitioners may choose not to be involved in medical assistance in dying, they must follow professional requirements set by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario and the College of Nurses of Ontario. This includes helping patients find another doctor or nurse practitioner who can provide medical assistance in dying. Your doctor or nurse practitioner can call a referral service for help finding another doctor.

## **WHERE CAN I DIRECT FURTHER QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS?**

Please feel free to contact the Chief of Staff through the Medical Affairs office by calling the hospital and dialing ext. 2379.

Information is also available on the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's website at <https://www.ontario.ca/page/medical-assistance-dying-and-end-life-decisions#section-0> or by emailing the Ministry at [endoflifedecisions@ontario.ca](mailto:endoflifedecisions@ontario.ca).