



JOURNEY HOME
FOR EMPOWERED LIVING AND DYING

Understanding MAiD

(Medical Assisted in Dying)

MAiD aims to enable people to have a peaceful death rather than a painful or prolonged dying process.

What is MAiD?

Medical Assistance In Dying (MAiD) is an end-of-life care option that an individual with a serious condition causing long-term suffering can voluntarily request MAiD when:

- a physician or nurse practitioner administers medications, at your request, that will end your life or
- the prescribing of a substance by a physician or nurse practitioner, at your request, that, when self-administered, will end your life

MAiD is only offered by a physician or nurse practitioner administering medications. A prescription to be self-administered is not an option.

MAiD is a complex and deeply personal topic. When deciding on MAiD, your healthcare team will ensure you understand your options and can communicate your decision. You will have time to think about your decision and may change your decision at any time.

Who can request MAiD?

Only you can voluntarily request MAiD. No one else can decide for you.

What are the eligibility requirements?

To receive medical assistance in dying in Ontario, you must:

- be eligible for publicly funded healthcare services in Canada
- be 18 years of age or older
- be capable of making healthcare decisions
- be able to provide informed consent, which means that you have permitted after you have received all the information you need to make your decision
- voluntarily request medical assistance in dying
- have a grievous and irremediable medical condition, which means you:
- have a serious and incurable illness, disease or disability
- are in an advanced state of irreversible decline
- are enduring physical or psychological suffering caused by the medical condition or the state of decline that is intolerable and cannot be relieved

*Currently, Canadians whose only medical condition is a mental illness and who otherwise meet all eligibility criteria are not eligible for MAiD.

Who do I speak with to learn more about MAiD?

You can speak to any healthcare team member to learn more about MAiD. This could be someone you are comfortable with and trust, such as your death doula, family, doctor, nurse, spiritual care provider, social worker, or other care team member.

The member of your care team will connect you with a member of the MAiD team who can provide you with the information you need.

Questions can also be directed to the Patient and Family Experience Office, which can connect patients to the appropriate people.

Only physicians or nurse practitioners can determine your eligibility and administer MAiD.

Is there a right decision?

This decision will be based on your values, beliefs and healthcare goals. Only you can determine what is right or wrong for you.

Your healthcare team will provide all the information you need to make an informed decision.

Can others decide for me?

No. Only you can decide to request and receive MAiD. Others cannot make this decision for you if you cannot communicate your wishes.

Can I write down my wishes for MAiD in case I lose my ability to make decisions about my health care?

No, you must be able to ask for MAiD when you request it; it cannot be written as an advanced directive.

Who decides if I meet the criteria for MAiD?

Two or more physicians or nurse practitioners will assess whether you meet all eligibility requirements.

Is MAiD covered by OHIP?

The Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP) covers all MAiD services and medications. Insurance companies have agreed not to withhold life insurance benefits from patients who have chosen MAiD, and the Coroner's Office will help families with insurance claims.

How do I request MAiD?

You can speak to any member of your healthcare team, who will connect you with appropriate professionals who can answer your questions and provide information about receiving MAiD.

Patients may direct questions to the Patient and Family Experience Office, which can connect them with the appropriate people.

To request MAiD, you must make a written request by completing the Ontario government request form. This form requires two witnesses. The written request is submitted to your physician or nurse practitioner.

How do I access the request form?

Please speak to a member of your healthcare team who can assist you in accessing the form.

You can also visit the Ontario Ministry of Health website to access forms. Please visit Ontario.ca.

Who can witness my request form?

You will require an independent witness to confirm the signing and dating of the request, and they must understand what they are signing. An independent witness must be at least 18 years old and understand what requesting MAiD means.

To be considered independent means that the witness cannot:

- Benefit from your death
- Be an owner or operator of a healthcare facility where you live or are receiving care
- Be an unpaid caregiver

How long does the process take?

If your natural death is not reasonably foreseeable, you must wait at least 90 days between submitting your written request and receiving MAiD. During this time, a comprehensive assessment of your circumstances leading to your request for MAiD will be completed to determine your eligibility to proceed. In cases where the loss of capacity to provide informed consent is imminent and you have been found eligible for MAiD, a waiver of final consent may be completed.

If you are eligible for MAiD and death is found to be reasonably foreseeable, then accommodation for a shorter wait time can proceed when the patient and physician are ready.

Can I change my mind?

Yes, you can change your mind at any time.

You will be asked several times throughout the process, including right before MAiD is administered if you would still like to receive it. End-of-life care can involve very difficult decisions, and we want to ensure you are always informed and able to make the right decision for you, which includes withdrawing your request at any time.

What does informed consent mean when requesting MAiD?

When requesting MAiD, consent needs to be:

- Informed: You have been given all the information needed to make your decision, including your medical diagnosis, available forms of treatment, and available options to relieve suffering.
- Voluntary: No one is forcing you to make this request.
- In writing: Your request has been made in writing using the Ontario Ministry of Health consent form.

What does it mean to be capable of deciding on your healthcare?

A person is capable of deciding if the individual is both:

- able to understand the information that is relevant to making that decision, and,
- able to appreciate the reasonably foreseeable consequences of that decision or lack of decision.

What is a grievous and irremediable medical condition?

A grievous and irremediable medical condition is when an individual has:

- A serious and incurable illness, disease, or disability (At this time, mental illness is not considered to be an illness, disease, or disability for the purposes of MAiD)
- In an advanced state of irreversible decline, and
- The illness, disease, or disability, or that state of decline, causes them to endure physical or psychological suffering that is intolerable to them and that cannot be relieved under conditions that they consider acceptable

What is suffering?

To request MAiD, your suffering must be considered “enduring and intolerable.” This means that your suffering is expected to last a long time and cannot be managed at a level you can tolerate or find acceptable.

How is MAiD different from stopping or not starting treatment?

Patients always have the right to stop treatment or to start treatment. Stopping treatment does not mean you choose to end your life, but your death may still happen. When requesting MAiD, you are making an informed decision to end your life.

Who can give MAiD?

Only physicians and nurse practitioners in Ontario can provide medical assistance in dying.

Some members of your healthcare team may not want to be involved in your decision to end your life because it is uncomfortable for them. You will always be given the care and support you need, even if that means being referred to another healthcare professional.

Will my whole healthcare team be involved?

Many healthcare professionals may be involved in providing options for treatment and care, including:

- physicians
- nurse practitioners
- palliative care
- social work
- death doulas
- spiritual care
- nurses
- community referrals where appropriate

How can my family be involved?

You may wish to inform your family of your decision. Making decisions about end-of-life care is extremely difficult, and having a strong support system through family and friends can be very helpful. Your decision regarding MAiD will also affect your family and friends.

If you choose, you can have family members present when receiving MAiD. Those present must understand what they will see and agree to stay with you. Your healthcare team can help provide you and your family with the needed information. Your healthcare team will follow up with family members as requested and as appropriate.

What happens after?

Your healthcare team will follow up with family members as requested and as appropriate.

In Ontario, the coroner is notified of all MAiD deaths. Family members should be aware that the coroner's process may delay the transfer of your body to a funeral home after MAiD. The Coroner's Office may contact the next of kin listed next.

You may want to plan to ensure that your personal affairs, wishes and funeral plans are in order.

What if I don't have a doctor?

You can contact the care coordination service, which can connect you with a doctor or nurse practitioner who provides MAiD services and provides more information about MAiD. The service can be reached at 1-866-286-4023 or TTY 1-844-953-3350.

I don't think my family member has made the right decision; what can I do?

Your family member's decision to receive MAiD services can be difficult to understand. Yes, this decision impacts you, but the decision to receive MAiD is up to the individual requesting the service.

An individual requesting MAiD is well informed about all other options and the MAiD process when they decide. Their healthcare team will provide the information and support requested. An individual can withdraw their request at any time.

End-of-life care decisions are difficult, but your family members will benefit from your support during this difficult process.

Support services are available if you are having trouble understanding and accepting your family member's decision.

Can I be with the individual when they receive the service?

Yes, if the individual has requested that you be present. We encourage you to speak with the individual and their healthcare team beforehand so that you can receive the information you need. It aims to enable people to have a peaceful death rather than a painful or prolonged dying process.