

# Medical Assistance In Dying

Information for Island Health patients and families



Seeking Medical Assistance in Dying is a deeply personal decision. It is very important 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 and it is important to note that not every person who inquires about Medical Assistance in Dying will be eligible. Of those who are, only a certain number will proceed with the process once alternative options have been explored.

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

## What is Medical Assistance in Dying?

Medical Assistance in Dying is a process whereby a doctor or nurse practitioner helps a patient who wants to voluntarily, intentionally end their life. Medical Assistance in Dying has been legal in Canada since June 2016 and is governed under federal law. This law sets out the eligibility requirements and processes under which Medical Assistance in Dying can be delivered to a patient.

## Who is Eligible to Receive Medical Assistance in Dying?

To receive Medical Assistance in Dying, you must meet all of the following criteria:

- 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
- Be at least 18 years old
- Be eligible for publicly-funded health services in Canada
- Request assistance without pressure or influence from anyone else
- Give informed consent throughout the process, including at the final moment when Medical Assistance in Dying is to be provided

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



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 to help you with this process if they do not personally agree with it, **but they must hand off your request and connect you with other care providers who can help you.**

## How Does the Process Work?

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 do not have to accept any of these services, but it is important 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.**

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## Record of Patient Request Form

Once you have discussed Medical Assistance in Dying with your care providers, your family and your other supports, a written Record of Patient Request form 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.

## Assessment Form

The assessment form ensures that you are aware of other options, that you meet the criteria for Medical Assistance in Dying and that you have the mental capacity to make this important decision. Two different doctors or nurse practitioners must each do separate assessments. If they are not sure whether you are capable of making the decision, a medical professional with expertise in mental capacity may also be consulted.

## Period of Reflection

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 form. 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?

During the period of reflection, if you are receiving care in an Island 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 can choose to receive Medical Assistance in Dying in your own home (which is what most people prefer), in a residential care home or in hospital. You can also decide if you'd like anyone with you when Medical Assistance in Dying is administered. Medical Assistance in Dying is administered with drugs that can be taken by mouth or given intravenously.



For more information about Medical Assistance in Dying, visit:

Island Health: [www.viha.ca/maid](http://www.viha.ca/maid)  
Health Canada: <http://healthycanadians.gc.ca/>

For further discussion, you or your doctor or nurse practitioner may contact Island Health:

Phone: 250-727-4382 (Greater Victoria)  
Toll Free: 1-877-370-8699  
Email: [maid@viha.ca](mailto:maid@viha.ca)