

Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID) for Patients and Families

Frequently Asked Questions

What is Medical Assistance in Dying?

Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID) is a medical procedure. It involves the administration of medications to intentionally and safely end the life of an adult patient who meets strict legal criteria, at the request of the patient. Federal law (Bill C-14) governs who is eligible, and the processes under which MAID can be delivered to a patient.

Who is eligible to receive MAID?

Federal law governs who is eligible to receive Medical Assistance in Dying. To be eligible, you must:

- Be at least 18 years of age.
- Be eligible for publicly funded health care services in Canada.
- Be capable of making health-care decisions for yourself.
- Have a grievous and irremediable medical condition which means:
 - You have a serious and incurable illness, disease or disability,
 - You are in an advanced state of decline that **cannot** be reversed,
 - You are experiencing unbearable physical or mental suffering from your illness, disease, disability or state of decline that **cannot** be relieved under conditions that you consider acceptable,
 - Your natural death has become reasonably foreseeable (this takes into account all of your medical circumstances and does not require a specific prognosis as to how long you have left to live).
- Have all the information required to make informed decisions, specifically about:
 - Your medical diagnoses,
 - Available forms of treatment,
 - Available options to relieve suffering, including palliative care.
- Have made a voluntary request for medical assistance in dying that is not the result of outside pressure or influence.

What does it mean to be capable?

To be capable to make decisions about your health care you must:

- Understand and remember information that is relevant to making a decision about your medical treatment.
- Appreciate the reasonably foreseeable consequences of a decision, or failing to take a decision.

The medical condition of people approaching end of life can change rapidly, and can result in a loss of capacity. If this occurs, MAID is no longer possible.

Can I write down my wishes for medical assistance in dying in case I lose the capacity to make decisions? Or, can family members make the decision for me?

You must be able to ask for medical assistance in dying at the time of the request. It cannot be written down ahead of time and no one else, including family, can make the decision.

I think I am eligible for MAID. What does the process involve?

In order for MAID to occur, a series of steps must be followed. In general, it usually takes a minimum of about two weeks to complete the necessary steps, but this timing can increase based on each patient's circumstance. If it is expected that you will die very soon, then there may be other end-of-life care options that are more appropriate for you.

Step 1: Written Request

You must make a written request for medical assistance in dying.

[Clinician Aid A](#)

Your signature must be witnessed by two independent witnesses, who must sign the document at the same time.

An independent witness must be 18 years of age and understand what it means to request medical assistance in dying.

To be considered independent, the witnesses cannot:

- Benefit from your death,
- Be an owner or operator of a health-care facility where you live or are receiving care,
- Be directly involved in providing you with health or personal care.

There is a provision for patients who cannot sign for themselves.

Step 2: Assessments of Eligibility

You will be assessed by at least two independent assessors. The physician or nurse practitioner who usually looks after you and knows your history and situation best may act as the first assessor.

For MAID to occur, both assessors must agree that you meet the eligibility criteria above. The assessment can take up to 1-2 hours per assessor. The assessment may include the following:

- A review of relevant medical history and your current medical situation.
- An assessment of your capacity to make decisions.
- A review of your current medications.

- A social history.
- A limited physical examination.
- **A psychosocial assessment**
- A detailed explanation of the MAID medications and procedure.
- Answering any questions or concerns you or your family may have.
- Signing a consent form.

Step 3: A Period of Reflection

The law requires that a minimum of 10 clear days must pass between the date that you sign the written request form and the date that MAID occurs. For example, if a patient signs the request form on November 1, then the first possible day when MAID could occur would be November 12. MAID could also occur after this date.

Depending on timing, it is possible that the reflection period may have passed before the medical assessment process has been completed.

The legal requirement for a period of reflection may be shortened in special circumstances if both assessors are in agreement that this is necessary.

Step 4: Provision of MAID

If you are deemed eligible and decide to proceed with MAID, your physician or nurse practitioner will work with you to create a detailed plan. This will include a discussion of the date, location, who will be present, and any special arrangements that are required.

It is necessary for the provider to confirm capacity (see above) and consent immediately prior to provision of MAID. This is an important safeguard for your protection.

Can I change my mind?

Yes. You can change your mind at any time, for any reason. Simply tell your physician, nurse practitioner or a member of your health-care team that you have changed your mind. Your physician or nurse practitioner will discuss what other options are available for your care, and you can be assured that they will all be high-quality and compassionate.

Your provider will give you an opportunity to change your mind at any point up to the provision of MAID.

Do I have to undergo treatment first?

No, you do not have to undergo treatment before requesting medical assistance in dying.

What if my health-care provider objects to medical assistance in dying?

Health-care providers have the right to conscientiously refuse to participate in medical assistance in dying based on moral or religious beliefs. If you request medical assistance in dying from a health-care provider who objects, they have an obligation to provide you with an effective and timely referral.

What else is involved?

The Office of the Chief Coroner must investigate cases of medical assistance in dying and will be contacted just after MAID has been provided. Usually, a representative from the coroner's office will wish to speak briefly to a patient's family member at this time.

Is there a fee associated with this service?

If you have provincial health-care coverage, then the costs of the assessments, medication and procedure are fully covered.

If I choose MAID, will it affect my life insurance?

In Ontario, law has been passed that ensures that the choice of MAID may not be used as a reason to deny insurance benefits under a valid policy.

What if I am not eligible?

If you are not eligible for MAID, you will continue to be supported with the compassionate care that you require.

What if I have other questions?

If you have questions, please discuss them with your physician or with a member of your health-care team. For more information about MAID, contact The Ottawa Hospital MAID Program: maid@toh.ca.