

Medical Assistance in Dying

Information for Patients, Families and Caregivers

This patient education resource is not medical advice. It provides essential information about Medical Assistance in Dying. Please talk to your doctor, nurse or other health-care team member to ask any questions that you might have about your situation.

For more information, scan this QR code or visit our website: Medical Assistance in Dying - The Ottawa Hospital

ottawahospital.on.ca/en/maid



What is Medical Assistance in Dying?

Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD) is a process by which a patient chooses to end their life with the help of a doctor or nurse practitioner. It is a medical procedure during which a patient is given medications to intentionally and safely end their life. Federal laws set the rules for who can use MAiD and how it must be done.

What are the eligibility criteria for MAiD?

People who apply for MAiD must:

- Be 18 years of age or older and be eligible for publicly funded healthcare in Canada.
- Have a serious and incurable illness, disease or disability.
- Be in an advanced state of decline that cannot be reversed.
- Be capable of making health care decisions for themselves and have all the information they need to make informed decisions about their illness,

all available treatments and options to help with their suffering, including palliative care.

- Be experiencing intolerable physical or mental suffering from their condition.
- Make a voluntary and witnessed request, in writing, for MAiD.

What does it mean to be capable of making health care decisions?

It means that you must understand and remember information to make decisions about your medical treatment. You also must be able to consider what might happen because of your decisions. If you are at risk of losing capacity because of your medical condition, your MAiD assessor will discuss options available to you.

What are the steps involved in the MAiD process?

MAiD is not a last-minute or rushed process. It can take several days or weeks to go through all the necessary steps. If you are likely to

die very soon, there may be other end-of-life care options that may be better suited for you than MAiD.

There are 2 pathways for patients. The first pathway or Track 1, applies if you have a Reasonably Foreseeable Natural Death (RFND). The second pathway or Track 2, applies if there is no Reasonably Foreseeable Natural Death (no-RFND). The track that applies to your situation will be determined by the MAiD assessors.

Step 1: Written Request

You must ask for MAiD in writing. In Ontario, there is an official form for this. Your signature must be witnessed by one person who must sign the document at the same time as you. Your witness must be 18 years of age or older and cannot be named in your will or benefit from your death in any way. The witness cannot own or be in charge of the healthcare facility where you live or get treated. They also cannot be your MAiD assessor or provider.

Step 2: Assessments of eligibility

You will have at least 2 separate assessments to find out if your request can be approved for MAiD. You may also need assessments by other healthcare professionals to determine if you can have MAiD. Both MAiD assessors must agree that you can be approved for MAiD. Each assessment can take up to 1 to 2 hours.

Assessments include:

- a review of your medical history and current medical situation,
- a discussion about treatment options and available supports,
- an assessment of your ability to make decisions,
- a detailed explanation of the MAiD process including which pathway you will follow based on your medical condition,
- an opportunity to answer any questions you or your loved ones may have.

Step 3: Possible waiting period

People who are approved for MAiD under Track 1 do not have a waiting period. For people who are approved for MAiD under Track 2, at least 90 days must pass between their first assessment and when MAiD can be provided.

Step 4: Provision of MAiD

If you have been approved for MAiD and decide to go ahead, your MAiD team will create a detailed plan with you. The following information may be helpful to think about:

- The date, location, who you would like present and any special arrangements you would like.
- You will need to make funeral arrangements, and ensure your will is up to date.
- You might want to consider if organ and tissue donation is something you would like.

What else is involved?

In Ontario, the Office of the Chief Coroner must be notified of all MAiD procedures. Someone from the coroner’s office will ask to speak to your next of kin a few days after MAiD has taken place.

Can I change my mind?

Yes. You can change your mind at any time, for any reason. Simply tell your doctor, nurse, or health professional helping you with MAiD that you do not wish to continue with MAiD.

Do I have to go through treatment first?

Not necessarily. The MAiD assessors will make sure that you are aware of all the options to relieve your suffering, including counselling services, mental health and disability support services, community services and palliative care.

I am suffering from mental illness, but no other health concerns. Can I have MAiD?

Based on changes to the MAiD law, people with mental illness as their **only** medical condition causing suffering are **not** allowed to have MAiD. This exclusion to the law remains valid until 2027. This will allow the Government of Canada more time to consider how MAiD can safely be provided to those whose only medical condition is mental illness.

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

No. MAiD will not affect life insurance or pensions.

What if my health-care provider does not agree with MAiD?

Health-care providers have the right to refuse to participate in MAiD based on their personal beliefs. In this case, they must refer you to someone who can help with your MAiD request.

What if I am not approved for MAiD?

If you are not eligible for MAiD, your family doctor and/or your health-care team will continue to care for you and support you as they normally would.

Where can I learn more?

You can visit the following websites:

Canada’s Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD) Law

www.justice.gc.ca

Medical Assistance in Dying and End of Life Decisions

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/medical-assistance-dying-and-end-life-decisions>



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