

Medical Aid in Dying

Steps Involved



When a person is nearing the end of life, is suffering too much and has lost the will to live, medical aid in dying can be a choice.

Below you will find helpful information on medical aid in dying. Members of your health team are always available to answer your questions and provide support.

What Is medical aid in dying?

In Québec, it “consists of a doctor administering medication to patients at the end of life, at their request, in order to relieve their suffering by bringing about their death.” This medical act is governed by the *Act Respecting End-of-Life Care*. To find out more about the law, go to the Useful resources section at the end of this information sheet.

Who can receive it?

The Act lays down conditions that patients must meet to receive medical aid in dying. All of the following criteria must be met:

- > Be insured in accordance with the *Health Insurance Act*
- > Be at least 18 years old

- > Be capable of giving consent to care, that is, be able to understand the situation and the information given by health professionals, as well as to make decisions
- > Be at the end of life
- > Suffer from a serious, incurable illness
- > Be in an advanced state of irreversible decline
- > Experience constant and unbearable physical or psychological suffering that cannot be relieved in a manner the person deems tolerable

Throughout the procedure, doctors must evaluate if the patient meets all the conditions.

If any of the conditions are not met, the request is rejected. If the patient’s situation changes, another request can be made. In the meantime, quality care appropriate to the patient’s needs is given.

Here are the steps to follow to request medical aid in dying:

You can stop your request for medical aid in dying at any time during the process.

1 Request for information

Ask a member of your healthcare team for information about medical aid in dying. You can ask the doctor, nurse, social worker, psychologist, occupational therapist or pharmacist. This person will answer your questions about the process. He or she will also inform you about the options for care and services that are available to you.

This first step provides information and helps clarify your wishes. **It does not commit you in any way.**

2 Written request

If you decide to make a formal request, a form is available. You must date and sign the form in the presence of a physician (or other health professional) and two witnesses, who must meet certain criteria.

You must make the request yourself, in a free and informed manner.

This means,

- without pressure from staff or people around you, and
- after being given all the information needed to make a decision.



3 Medical assessment

Within a few days of signing your request, you will see two doctors. Each of them must confirm that you qualify for medical aid in dying, in line with the conditions stated in the *Act Respecting End-of-Life Care*. Do not hesitate to ask them questions or to talk to them about your concerns.

4 Preparation

If your request for medical aid in dying is accepted, a doctor will meet with you to confirm

- your decision, and
- that you still qualify for medical aid in dying, in line with the conditions stated in the *Act Respecting End-of-Life Care*.

If you want to pursue the process, you can then plan how you would like things to go. For example, you can determine the date and where it will happen, who you want by your side and, if you wish, the rituals. Your healthcare team can help you prepare.

In most cases, there is a 10-day period between the time you sign the form and when medical aid in dying is provided.

5 On the day

The doctor will ask you one last time to confirm that you want to receive medical aid in dying. Once you've given your consent, the doctor will give you the first medications, which will put you to sleep. He or she will stay with you until you have died; your loved ones can also stay with you, if you wish.



USEFUL RESOURCES

For more information about the *Act Respecting End-of-Life Care* (requirements, your rights and the process), go to:

> sante.gouv.qc.ca/en

Click on Assistance Measures and Programs → Medical aid in dying

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The content of this document in no way replaces the recommendations and diagnoses made, or the treatment suggested by your health professional.

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