

# Medical Aid in Dying

## Understanding the steps involved



This fact sheet looks at medical aid in dying, a form of end-of-life care. It explains what it is, as well as the conditions for receiving it and the steps to be followed.

Members of your care team are there to answer your questions and support you in your reflection and choices.

### What is medical aid in dying?

In Québec, it involves care provided by a doctor. It consists of administering medications to a person, at the person's request, with a view to relieving his or her suffering by inducing death.

This is a medical act governed by a provincial law (Act Respecting End-of-Life Care) and a federal law. To find out more about these laws, see the Useful Resources section at the end of this fact sheet.

### Who can receive it?

The law sets out the conditions that a person must satisfy to receive medical aid in dying. All must be met. Here are those that apply in Québec:

- > 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 provided by health professionals, as well as to make decisions.
- > Suffer from a serious, incurable illness.
- > Have a medical condition that is characterized by an advanced and irreversible decline in the person's capacities.
- > Experience constant and unbearable physical or psychological suffering that cannot be relieved under conditions that the person deems tolerable.

Throughout the entire process, **doctors must evaluate whether you satisfy all the conditions.**

If any one of these conditions is not met, your request will be denied. You'll be able to make a new request if your situation changes. You will continue to receive appropriate care.



## What are the steps to request it?

Please note that you can stop your request at any step.

### 1 Request for information

This involves asking a member of your healthcare team for information about medical aid in dying. It could be a doctor, a nurse, a social worker, a psychologist, or a pharmacist. That 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.

The purpose of this first step is for you to get information and clarify your wishes. **It does not commit you in any way.**

### 2 Written request

If you decide to make an official request, there is form to be completed. You must date and sign it in the presence of a doctor (or another health professional) and an independent witness.

You must make the request **yourself, in a free and informed manner**. This means:

- without pressure from your friends and family or from the healthcare staff
- after being given all the information you need to make your decision



### 3 Medical assessment

This assessment is conducted by two doctors. Each of them must conclude that you qualify for medical aid in dying, in line with the conditions stated in the law. To do this, they can ask for opinions from other doctors or health professionals.

### 4 Preparation

If your request for medical aid in dying is accepted, your care team will help you to prepare. You'll be able to set a date with the doctor who will perform the care. You'll also be able to choose how you want it to unfold: in what place, with what loved ones and what rituals, etc. During this step, your wish to receive medical aid in dying will be re-verified.

### 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 first give you medications that will put you to sleep, followed by those that result in stopping your vital functions. He or she will stay with you until you have died. Your loved ones can also stay with you, if you wish.

If there is a risk that you might not be capable of giving final consent on the day of care, an arrangement can be made in advance to allow you to receive it anyway.

## IMPORTANT

Depending on your health situation, life expectancy, and legal requirements, the time between when the assessment of your request begins and when you receive the care can be anywhere from a few days to more than 90 days. Your care team will tell you what time frame you can expect in your case.



### USEFUL RESOURCES

To consult the texts of the laws, enter the term "medical aid in dying" into the search engines of these government sites:

- > [quebec.ca/en/](http://quebec.ca/en/)
- > [canada.ca](http://canada.ca)

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

To find out more about the Centre hospitalier de l'Université de Montréal  
[chumontreal.qc.ca](http://chumontreal.qc.ca)