



Lakeridge
Health

Understanding Medical Assistance in Dying

**Frequently Asked Questions for Patients and
Their Family Members/Essential Partners-in-Care**

Medical Assistance in Dying: Frequently Asked Questions

It is important that you read and understand the information about medical assistance in dying (MAiD). Please talk to the health-care team if you have questions or do not understand the information about MAiD.

1. What is MAiD”?

- a) MAiD is a process that allows someone who is found eligible to be able to get support from a medical practitioner in ending their life. (Adapted from: Medical Assistance in dying: Overview – Canada.ca)
- b) If you are eligible to receive MAiD, a doctor or nurse practitioner will give you medications at your request that will end your life.

2. Who can request MAiD?

You can request MAiD if you meet all of the following criteria:

- a) Have or are eligible for an Ontario health card.
- b) Are 18 years of age or older.
- c) Are capable of making decisions about your health care (see questions # 5 for the definition of capable).
- d) Have grievous and irremediable medical condition (see question # 6 for the definition of grievous and irremediable medical condition).
- e) Have made, without being pressured by someone, a request for MAiD.
- f) Give informed consent to receive MAiD (see question # 8 for the definition of informed consent).

3. Who decides if I meet the criteria for MAiD?

You will be assessed by two (2) or more independent assessors (assessors may be a doctor or nurse practitioner). They will assess you separately, but they have to agree that you meet the criteria.

4. How long will this assessment take?

This is different for each person as it is based on how much time the assessors need to check if you meet the criteria.

5. What does it mean to be capable of making a decision about your health care?

A patient is capable of making a decision about their health care if they understand and appreciate:

- The information that is needed to make a decision about their own health care; and,
- The effects of any choice you make.

Your doctor or nurse practitioners will ask you questions that will help to decide if you are capable of making decisions about your health care.

6. What is grievous and irremediable medical condition?

You have grievous and irremediable medical condition if:

- a) You have an illness, disease, or disability that is serious and cannot be cured.
- b) You are not able to do as many things as you used to and this will not get better.
- c) You are suffering physically or psychologically from your illness, disease, or disability or state. This suffering cannot be managed at a level you can cope with (see the definition of suffering below).

7. What is suffering?

It may be hard for you to describe your suffering. Only you understand what it is like for you. You may be suffering physically, mentally or both.

To be eligible for MAiD, your suffering must be considered “enduring and intolerable”. This means that your suffering is expected to last a long time and cannot be managed at a level you can cope with. Talk to your health-care team about what this is like for you.

8. How do I give informed consent for MAiD?

To request MAiD, you need to give consent that is:

1. Informed – this means, you have been given information about other choices of care that may ease your suffering. This includes information about palliative care.
2. Voluntary – this means, no one is forcing you to make this request.
3. In writing – this means, you need to put your request for MAiD in writing. This will be done by filling out a form called the “Clinician Aid A”. Speak to your health-care team to get the form.

9. How do I make a request for MAiD?

The first step is to talk to your health-care team about any concerns and questions you may have about end-of-life care and MAiD. Your health-care team will give you information and talk with you about the choices you have regarding your care. If you make the choice to request MAiD, you will need to complete a request form. You can ask your health-care team for this form. You will need to have one (1) person witness your signature on the request form. You will need to give the completed request form back to a member of your health-care team once it has been completed.

10. Who can witness my request?

Your written request for MAiD must be signed and dated in front of an independent witness. The witness must:

- Be 18 years of age or older;
- Understand that you are asking for MAiD;
- Not know or believe they will benefit from your will;
- Not be an owner or operator of a healthcare facility where you are getting care; and
- Not be involved in giving you health-care services.

11. What happens if I cannot sign the request form?

If you are not able to sign and date the request form for MAiD, another person can sign for you. The person must:

- Be 18 years of age or older;
- Understand that you are asking for MAiD;
- Not know or believe that they will benefit from your will;
- Be different from the signature witness.

The signing must be done in front of you and with your direction.

12. Can I write down my wishes for MAiD in case I lose my ability to make decisions about my health care?

You can waive the requirement for giving final consent just before MAiD is provided.

You can waive the requirement only if all of the following are true:

- Your natural death is reasonably foreseeable; AND
- Your health-care provider confirmed that you were at risk of losing capacity to provide final consent; AND

- You made a written plan with your health-care provider in which you gave consent in advance to receive MAiD on your chosen date or before if you no longer have capacity to consent on that date.

13. Is there a waiting period after I request MAiD?

If both assessors agree that your death is naturally foreseeable and you are eligible for MAiD, there is no waiting period, although the team will need time to get things ready for the procedure. This is known as Track 1.

If both assessors agree that your death is not reasonably foreseeable and you are eligible for MAiD, there is a minimum assessment period of 91 days before MAiD can be provided. This is known as Track 2.

14. How is MAiD different from stopping or not starting treatment?

At any time you can choose not to start treatment(s) or to stop treatment(s). When you make these choices you are not choosing to end your life, but your death may still happen. Your Substitute Decision Maker (SDM) can make these decisions for you if you are not capable of making your own health care decision.

When you request MAiD, you are asking to be given a medication that will cause your death. Your SDM cannot make this request for you. Only you can make this request.

15. Who can provide MAiD?

Any medical doctor or nurse practitioner who is licensed in Ontario can give MAiD. If your doctor or nurse practitioner is not willing to help you with this, they will need to refer you to another doctor or nurse practitioner.

16. How can I expect my health-care team to be involved?

Some members of the health-care team may choose not to be involved in your decision to end your life because it is uncomfortable for them. It is a personal choice for them too. You will continue to get the care and support you need from the health-care team.

17. Do I have to tell my family?

You decide who is a member of your family or an Essential-Partner-in-Care (EPC). We encourage you to talk with your family members/EPCs about your decision to request MAiD. Your decision will affect them too.

Talking with your family members/EPCs involved with your care may help you feel supported. If it is difficult to talk to your family members/EPCs about MAiD, you can ask for help from your health-care team. It may help for you to talk with a social worker or spiritual care provider.

18. How can my family members/EPCs be involved?

Your family members/EPCs cannot give you the medications that will cause your death. Only your doctor or nurse practitioner can give you these medications. Your family members/EPCs can help you complete the request form.

You can have anyone you choose stay with you when you die. Your health-care team will give you and your family members/EPCs the information they need to help them understand what to expect.

19. How long does it take for the medications to work to end my life?

Medication will be given to you by a doctor or nurse practitioner that will make you fall asleep quickly. Once you are asleep, the rest of the medications will be given to you and will end your life in five to 15 minutes.

20. Do I need to get the court's permission?

No, you do not need the court's permission to make a request for MAiD. This decision is made between you and your health-care provider. You can ask for legal advice if you would like to.

21. Will the Coroner be called?

No, the Coroner will not be called. The MAiD provider completes a report which a nurse Investigator at the Coroner's office reviews. Only in special circumstances is the Nurse Investigator called directly, such as when the death would have otherwise qualified as a coroner's case.

There will be no paperwork that says you died of MAiD (i.e. on the death certificate). The condition that qualified you for MAiD will be listed as the cause of death.

22. Can I change my mind?

Yes, you can change your mind at any time and for any reason. Tell any member of your health-care team if you change your mind. No one will think any less of you and you will still receive the health care you need.

Your health-care team will ask you several times if you still want to be given MAiD. They want to make sure that you have not changed your mind and that you are not being forced to make this decision. Your health-care team will also answer any questions or concerns you have.

23. What if I want to be an organ donor?

Talk to a member of your health-care team if you want to be an organ and/or tissue donor. You can also contact the Trillium Gift of Life Network at or 1-800-263-2833. For more information, go to their website at www.giftoflife.on.ca

24. What if I do not have a doctor?

You can request MAiD without a referral from a doctor. You can make your request to anyone on the health-care team. You can also call the provincial MAiD number at 1-866-286-4023, or 1-844-953-3350.

If you do not have a family doctor or nurse practitioner, you can contact:

College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario
80 College Street, Toronto, Ontario M5G 2E2
416-967-2603 or 1-800-268-7096 Ext 603
<http://www.cpsso.on.ca>

25. Where can I get more information about MAiD?

1. From any member of your health-care team.
2. From the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario website found at: <http://www.cpsso.on.ca>.
3. From the Government of Ontario Website found at: www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/MAiD.