

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS – MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

06/01/2017

1. Who can receive Medical Assistance In Dying?

Here are some of the legal requirements set out in federal legislation that must be met. To receive Medical Assistance in Dying, a patient must:

- Be eligible for publicly funded health care services in Canada
- Be 18 years of age or older
- Be capable of making health care decisions and
- Have a grievous and irremediable medical condition, which means the patient:
 - Has a serious and incurable illness, disease or disability, and
 - Is in an advanced state of irreversible decline in capability, and
 - Is enduring physical or psychological suffering, caused by the medical condition or the state of decline, that is intolerable to the person, and
 - Natural death has become reasonably foreseeable.

Your doctor or nurse practitioner will make sure that you are making your request voluntarily and that you are providing informed consent. Your doctor or nurse practitioner will discuss the options available to relieve your suffering, including palliative care, before you provide informed consent to Medical Assistance in Dying.

2. How can Home and Community Care Support Services Champlain help me with my request for Medical Assistance In Dying?

Home and Community Care Support Services Champlain will work with your doctor or nurse practitioner to coordinate the procedure in your home, which may include arranging for a nurse to be present, sending equipment and supplies, and ensuring all the documents are completed before the procedure.

Home and Community Care Support Services Champlain can also answer your questions, educate you and your loved ones and make sure you are prepared for what to expect, during and after the procedure. They can also help you and your loved ones find additional support in the community if it's needed.

3. Where can Medical Assistance in Dying take place?

You can request to be Medically Assisted In Dying in a hospital, long-term care home or palliative care facility, or in your own home, including a retirement home.

Some hospitals or institutions may choose not to provide Medical Assistance In Dying or have limitations on how they provide it. Talk to your doctor, nurse practitioner or Care Coordinator about where you would like the procedure to take place.

4. What if I change my mind?

You can withdraw your request at any point during the process, including immediately before the procedure.

5. I'm capable now, but I may not be capable in the future due to my medical condition. Can I provide advanced directives for Medical Assistance In Dying?

You must personally consent to Medical Assistance In Dying. Another person, often called a substitute decision maker or Power of Attorney, cannot consent on your behalf or make the request for you.

You cannot give written or verbal consent in advance. You must be able to provide consent until the moment you receive Medical Assistance In Dying.

6. My [family member] doesn't speak English very well, but is capable and can make decisions about their healthcare. Can he/she still receive Medical Assistance In Dying?

If you or a loved one needs help to understand information about Medical Assistance in Dying, talk to your doctor, nurse practitioner or Care Coordinator. They will take all the necessary steps (such as finding an interpreter or providing other assistance) to ensure you can understand the information and can communicate your decision.

7. I don't live in Ontario, but want to receive Medical Assistance in Dying at a family member's home in Ontario. How do I proceed?

In order to receive services from the Home and Community Care Support Services Champlain, you must have a valid Ontario Health Card. This means that you are a resident of Ontario and are eligible and entitled to receive Ontario's health care services.

There are situations where a person who lives outside of Ontario can receive healthcare services in Ontario. Please talk to your doctor, nurse practitioner or Care Coordinator about your options.

8. My family physician doesn't support my decision for Medical Assistance In Dying? Can I find another physician who can help me?

Some doctors or nurse practitioners may choose not to provide Medical Assistance In Dying. However, in Ontario, it is their professional duty to refer you to another doctor or nurse practitioner who is available and willing to assess your eligibility for this service.

Physicians and nurse practitioners cannot impede or cause delays in you accessing Medical Assistance In Dying, even if it conflicts with their personal, moral or religious beliefs.

9. My local hospital doesn't perform this procedure. Can I go to another hospital?

Hospitals are not required to provide Medical Assistance In Dying, or may have limitations on how they provide it. If this is the case, they are encouraged to make this information available to the public. Your local hospital may be able to refer you to another hospital where Medical Assistance in Dying is performed.

If you want more information about where the Medical Assistance in Dying can take place, talk to your doctor, nurse practitioner or Care Coordinator.

10. How can my family/friends be involved in the process for Medical Assistance In Dying?

Home and Community Care Support Services recognizes that families vary in their level of involvement with one another. While involving your family in this decision is always encouraged, Home and Community Care Support Services respects that not all family members will be involved. Home and Community Care Support Services encourages you to talk with your loved ones about your choice to pursue Medical Assistance In Dying.

11. What if my family doesn't support my decision?

Home and Community Care Support Services encourages you to talk with your loved ones about your choice to pursue Medical Assistance In Dying and to bring forward any questions or concerns to your doctor, nurse practitioner or Care Coordinator. Your doctor, nurse practitioner or Care Coordinator may be able to help you find some support for you loved ones during this process.

While open communication is always encouraged, there is no legal obligation to inform your loved ones of your decision to pursue Medical Assistance in Dying, nor do they have to be in agreement with your decision.

12. Can my family get support throughout this process? Will they get support after I die?

Talk to your doctor, nurse practitioner or Care Coordinator about accessing spiritual or other types of support during and after the process.

13. Is Medical Assistance In Dying legal?

As of June 6, 2016, it is legal for a doctor to provide medical assistance in dying for individuals who meet the pre-defined eligibility criteria.

14. Do I have to pay anything to get this procedure?

This service is covered by the Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP) and drugs required for Medical Assistance in Dying will be available at no cost.

15. What is the process for Medical Assistance In Dying?

High level overview of the process for Medical Assistance In Dying:

- A person talks to their doctor or nurse practitioner (NP) about their options for treatment, which may include Medical Assistance in Dying, palliative care or other end-of-life care options.
- Step 1: which may include Medical Assistance in Dying, palliative care or other end-of-life care options.
- Step 2: The person makes a written request for Medical Assistance in Dying before two independent witnesses.
- Step 3: The doctor/NP assesses the person against eligibility criteria for Medical Assistance in Dying.
- Step 4: The doctor/NP reminds the person of his/her ability to withdraw the request at any time.
- Step 5: An independent second doctor/NP confirms, in writing, that the person meets the eligibility criteria for Medical Assistance in Dying.
- Step 6: The person completes a 10-day reflection period from the date of request to provision of Medical Assistance in Dying. The reflection period is intended to provide both the patient and the doctor/NP an opportunity to consider the request.
- Step 7: The doctor/NP informs the dispensing pharmacist that prescribed substances is intended for Medical Assistance in Dying.
- Step 8: Provision of Medical Assistance in Dying.
- Step 9: The Coroner is notified, and an investigation is conducted. The Medical Certificate of Death is completed by the Coroner in all instances of Medical Assistance in Dying.

16 Who can be my witnesses?

The federal legislation requires that the witnesses be at least 18 years of age, and be able to understand the nature of the request for medical assistance in dying. Witnesses must *not*:

- know or believe that they are a beneficiary under the will of the person making the request, or a recipient, in any other way, of a financial or other material benefit resulting from that person's death;
- be an owner or operator of any health care facility at which the person making the request is being treated or any facility in which that person resides;
- be directly involved in providing health care services to the person making the request; or
- directly provide personal care to the person making the request

17. How is the procedure done?

Once the waiting period has passed, your doctor or nurse practitioner will either give you the drugs by intravenous (IV) injection, or will write a prescription for you to fill on your own. This means you take the drugs yourself, in a setting of your choice. How you receive the drugs is your choice.

Right before administering the drugs or giving you the prescription, your doctor or nurse practitioner will give you an opportunity to withdraw your request, will confirm that he or she finds that you are still mentally capable of making this choice, and will get your final consent to proceed.

18. How long do I have to wait before receiving Medical Assistance in Dying?

At least 10 days must pass before assistance in dying is provided, starting from when you signed the written request, to give you time to think about your decision. In some cases (if your health is declining rapidly, for example) the doctors or nurse practitioners may approve a shorter waiting period. You may also withdraw your request at any time.

19. What happens after I die?

Under current law, all medical assistance in dying deaths must be reported to the Office of the Chief Coroner. Once a death is reported, the Office of the Chief Coroner is required to investigate. This includes examination of the body to the extent that is necessary to enable the coroner to satisfy their mandated duties. Each investigation is different, and the coroner cannot determine in advance of any death whether an autopsy will be necessary or who may be assisting with the investigation.

Your loved ones or health care providers should make sure that they can provide all the information and documentation that the doctor, nurse practitioner or coroner may require.

20. Where can I find more information about Medical Assistance in Dying?

Talk to your doctor, nurse practitioner or Care Coordinator if you have more questions about Medical Assistance in Dying.

The *Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's* website also has general information about Medical Assistance in Dying.

Please visit: <http://health.gov.on.ca/>

Or check out: <http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/maid/docs/maid.pdf>

For general questions about Medical Assistance in Dying in Ontario you can email endoflifedecisions@ontario.ca

If you feel an urgent need for assistance, consider the following resources, available 24 hours a day/7 days a week:

- If you have a medical emergency or require immediate attention, call 9-1-1
- If you are experiencing distress or a crisis, there are support lines in many cities across Ontario. A list of phone numbers is available at <http://www.dcontario.org/centres.html>
- **If you need assistance or services to address a mental health issue, call Ontario's Mental Health Helpline at 1-866-531-2600**
- If you need information about community, social, non-clinical health and related government services in Ontario, dial 2-1-1

21. How do I provide feedback about Medical Assistance in Dying?

Your feedback will help us continually improve our programs and services. Your Care Coordinator is familiar with your situation and wants to hear what is going well for you and what can be improved.

Source:

- <https://www.ontario.ca/page/medical-assistance-dying-and-end-life-decisions>
- <http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/maid/>
- TOH policy
- College of physicians and surgeons of Ontario:
<http://www.cpso.on.ca/CPSO/media/documents/Policies/Policy-Items/medical-assistance-in-dying.pdf?ext=.pdf>
- <https://healthsci.queensu.ca/education/cpd/maid>
- <http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/maid/docs/maid.pdf>