



Lakeridge  
Health

# Understanding Medical Assistance in Dying

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

Adapted for use at Lakeridge Health and used with permission  
from  
Peter Allatt, Bioethicist  
University of Toronto Joint Centre for Bioethics  
MAiD Implementation Task Force

# Medical Assistance in Dying: Frequently Asked Questions

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This handout will give you information about medical assistance in dying. It is important that you read and understand all of the information in this handout. Please talk to your healthcare team if you have questions or do not understand any information we give you.

## 1. What is “medical assistance in dying (MAiD)”?

- a) A doctor will give you medications at your request that will end your life;  
or
- b) You take medications prescribed by a doctor at your request that will end your life.

**Please note:** At Lakeridge Health, MAiD is given by a doctor. A doctor will give you medications by injection at your request that will end your life. This will happen in the hospital only.

## 2. Who can request MAiD?

You can request MAiD if you:

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

You must meet **all** of these criteria.

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

You will be assessed by 2 or more doctors. They have to agree that you meet the criteria. If one or more of the doctors feel you do not meet the criteria, you can ask to be assessed by another doctor.

## 4. How long will this assessment take?

It depends how much time the doctors need to make sure that you meet the criteria. Please talk to your healthcare team if you have concerns about this.

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

You are capable of making a decision about your healthcare if you understand and appreciate:

- The information that is needed to make a decision about your healthcare; and
- The effects of any decision or lack of decision you make.

Your doctors will ask you questions that will help to decide if you are capable of making decisions about your healthcare.

## 6. What is a grievous and irremediable medical condition?

You have a grievous and irremediable medical condition if:

- a) You have an illness, disease or disability that is serious and cannot be cured;
- b) You are less capable of doing things 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 tolerate (see the definition of suffering below) and;
- d) Your natural death is expected in the near future.

## 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, psychologically or both.

To request 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 tolerate. Talk to your healthcare 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

You have been given information about other choices of care that may lessen your suffering. This includes information about palliative care.

### 2. Voluntary

No one is forcing you to make this request.

### 3. In writing

You need to put your request in writing.

## 9. How do I make a request for MAiD?

First, talk to your healthcare team about the concerns and questions you have about end of life care and MAiD. Your healthcare team will give you information and

talk with you about the choices of care you have. If you decide that you want to choose MAiD, you will need to complete a request form. You need to have 2 people witness your signature on the request form. Ask your healthcare team for this form. You will need to give the completed request form to a member of your healthcare team.

#### **10. Who can witness my request form?**

The 2 witnesses must:

- Be at least 18 years of age;
- 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 health care facility where you are getting care;
- Not be involved in giving health care services and;
- Not be giving you any personal care.

#### **11. What happens if I can't sign the request form?**

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

- Be at least 18 years of age;
- Understand that you are requesting MAiD and;
- Not know or believe they will benefit from your Will.

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 healthcare?**

No, you must be able to ask for MAiD at the time you wish to receive it. You cannot make your wishes known in an advance care plan (example: a living will).

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

Yes. You will need to wait for a **minimum** of 10 days, not including the day you sign your request and the day that MAiD is given.

This waiting period may be decreased if both doctors assessing you agree:

- That your death may happen sooner than expected; or
- That you may soon become less capable of making decisions about your healthcare.

#### **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 can make these decisions for you if you are not capable.

When you request MAiD, you are choosing to take or be given a medication that will cause your death. Your Substitute Decision Maker cannot make this request for you. Only you can make this request.

### **15. Who can give MAiD?**

Any medical doctor who is licenced in Ontario can give MAiD. If your doctor is not willing to help you with this, he/she will refer you to another doctor. At Lakeridge Health, only doctors who have received education and training will be able to assess and give MAiD.

### **16. Can I expect my healthcare team to be involved?**

Some members of your healthcare team may not want to be involved in your decision to end your life because it is not comfortable for them. It is a very personal choice for them too. You will still be given the care and support you need from your healthcare team.

### **17. Do I have to tell my family?**

You decide who is a member of your family or a partner in your care. It is important to talk with your family members/partners in care about your decision to request MAiD. Your decision will affect them too.

Talking with your family members/partners in care may help you with your decision. If it is difficult to talk with your family members/partners in care for any reason, you can ask for help from your healthcare team. It may help for you to talk with a social worker or spiritual care provider.

### **18. How can my family members/partners in care be involved?**

Your family members/partners in care cannot give you the medications that will cause your death. This must be done by you or your doctor. Your family members/partners in care can help you fill in the request form. They can also support you in your decision.

Your family members/partners in care can stay with you when you die. It is important that they understand what they will see before they agree to stay with you. Your healthcare team will give you and your family members/partners in care the information they need to be ready for what will happen after the medications are given to you.

### **20. How long does it take for the medications to work to end my life?**

Medications given to you by a doctor will be effective in ending your life in about 30 minutes.

## **21. 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 doctor. You can ask for legal advice if you feel it is necessary to do so.

## **22. Will the Coroner be called?**

Yes, in the province of Ontario, the Coroner will be called. The Coroner must sign your death certificate if you have been given MAiD. Your family will need to be aware that it is possible that the Coroner's process can result in delays in transferring your body to the funeral home after MAiD.

## **23. Can I change my mind?**

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

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

## **24. What if I want to be an organ donor?**

Talk to a member of your healthcare 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 found at [www.giftoflife.on.ca](http://www.giftoflife.on.ca)

## **25. What if I do not have a doctor?**

If you do not have a family doctor, you can contact the:

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>

## **26. Where can I get more information about MAiD?**

1. From any member of your healthcare team.
2. From the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario website found at: [www.cpsso.on.ca](http://www.cpsso.on.ca)
3. From the Government of Ontario website found at: [www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/MAiD](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/MAiD)