



## **This booklet contains useful information about medical aid in dying for you and your loved ones.**

Serious and incurable diseases or serious physical impairments causing significant and enduring disabilities can be very difficult to cope with. For a small number of people living with these conditions, the care and support provided, including palliative care, may not be enough to relieve their pain and suffering.

The Act respecting end-of-life care provides another option for people who have exhausted all therapeutic possibilities, both curative and palliative, and who would rather die than continue to suffer.

If you are living with a situation that is causing you to suffer, do not hesitate to consult a health or social services professional for support, or to call 811 if you do not have access to a professional.

**The members of your care team are always available to answer your questions, support you and guide you through this stage of your life. Feel free to share your thoughts and wishes with them.**

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## **What is medical aid in dying?**

In Québec, this care consists of an authorized professional (doctor or specialized nurse practitioner) administering medication to a person at their request, in order to relieve their suffering by bringing about their death (Gouvernement du Québec, 2024).

It is a medical procedure governed by the Act respecting end-of-life care, passed into law on December 1, 2015. Medical aid in dying may be administered at any institution within Québec's health and social services network, as well as at home.

## **Who can obtain it?**

The Act respecting end-of-life care sets out specific provisions for obtaining medical aid in dying. A person must meet all the criteria below to obtain medical aid in dying:

- Be an insured person within the meaning of the Health Insurance Act;
- Be at least 18 years of age;
- Be capable of giving consent to care, i.e., be capable of understanding the situation and the information received and be capable of making decisions;
- Suffer from a serious and incurable illness or have a serious physical impairment causing significant and enduring disabilities;
- Be in a medical state of advanced, irreversible decline in capability;
- Experience enduring and unbearable physical or psychological suffering that cannot be relieved under conditions the person considers tolerable.

# How is a request processed?

Note that you can withdraw your request for medical aid in dying at any time.

## Here are steps in requesting medical aid in dying

### 1. Request for information

A health care professional can answer your questions. They will also inform you of the care and services available to you.

A health care professional cannot refuse to discuss a request for medical aid in dying.

This step is meant to give you information and clarify your wishes. It does not commit you to anything.

### 2. Written request

If you wish to make an official request, talk to your health care professional, who will guide you through the process.

You will need to sign and date a medical aid in dying request form in the presence of a health care professional and an independent witness. The witness cannot be, or believe themselves to be, a beneficiary of your estate.



## You must request medical aid in dying yourself, in a free and informed manner.

That means:

- Without pressure from your loved ones or the medical staff;
- After having received all the information needed to make your decision.

### 3. The assessment

Once you sign your request, two different authorized professionals (doctor or specialized nurse practitioner) will do an assessment. They will take turns discussing with you and assessing whether your situation meets each of the criteria set out in the legislation, giving access to medical aid in dying.

These meetings are important so that you can explain the reasons for your request and state all your needs.

### 3. The assessment (continued)

Once both authorized professionals have confirmed that your situation meets all the criteria, the process continues. There are two possibilities depending on the assessments:

#### Natural death is reasonably foreseeable

- There is no legislated waiting period following two conclusive assessments;
- Option to sign the waiver of final consent. This is a written agreement between you and the authorized professional, allowing for the administration of medical aid in dying in the event that you lose your ability to give consent at the time of care.

#### Natural death is not reasonably foreseeable

- **90-day waiting period** between the time one of the two authorized professionals reviews your file and the day medical aid in dying is provided;
- No option to sign the waiver of final consent: You must be able to give consent until the end of the process.

If one of the authorized professionals finds you ineligible, your request will be refused and the process will be terminated. Rest assured that your doctor and care team will continue to care for you based on your treatment plan. However, if your clinical condition changes, you may submit another request.

### 4. Preparation

If, based on the assessments, it is determined that you meet all the legal criteria, the authorized professional who will provide the medical aid in dying will plan the process with you.

#### Here are some of the details you will need to discuss:

- Approximate date and time;
- Loved ones who will be present;
- Place;
- Rituals you would like carried out;
- Last wishes;
- Etc.

Your preferences will be taken into consideration as much as possible in the circumstances.

Early in the process, the nursing staff will examine your veins to determine the best access for the medication.

It is important to make sure your legal documents are in order and reflect your wishes (will, funeral, etc.).

Throughout the process, members of the interdisciplinary team, including the doctor, nurses, psychosocial or spiritual care professionals, will work very closely with you and your loved ones to help you plan this step as humanely as possible.

## 5. On the designated day

The authorized professional and the care team will try to make your final moments as peaceful as possible. Anyone you want to be with you at this time is welcome to be present. The professionals involved will also provide you and your loved ones with emotional support as you say your final farewells.

### **Informed consent**

When the time comes, the authorized professional will ask again if you still want to receive medical aid in dying. After obtaining your consent and making sure you are ready, the authorized professional will begin administering the medications.

The first medication is a sedative that will relax you and put you to sleep; the second one will put you into a deep artificial coma and stop your breathing. The third is a neuromuscular blocker. It will stop your heart and result in death. The procedure is quick and completely painless. It does not cause any suffering.

The care team will stay with you and your loved ones until your death.

### **Bereavement kit**

Your loved ones may be given a bereavement kit, which includes a list of community bereavement resources and references for adults and children.

Thinking about a critical illness and the possibility of death is an emotionally draining process. At any time, if you wish to meet with a psychosocial or spiritual care professional for support or guidance, please let us know.



# Additional information

For information about palliative care or medical aid in dying, contact one of the professionals in your care team or the palliative care nurse consultant in your area:

## Contact information

### Palliative care nurse consultants

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- **Jardin-Roussillon**  
514-444-1569 | 438-821-2880
- **Haut Saint-Laurent**  
438-351-1490
- **Suroît**  
579-491-0339 | 579-490-3354
- **Vaudreuil-Soulanges**  
579-491-8792 | 579-490-3354

## Useful resources

### Government website

For more information about end-of-life care, visit: [quebec.ca/en/health/health-system-and-services/end-of-life-care](http://quebec.ca/en/health/health-system-and-services/end-of-life-care)

### Advance care planning

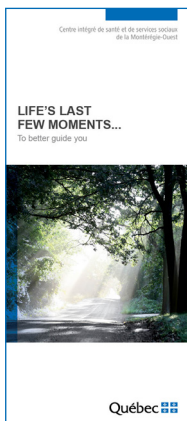
For more information about advance care planning, visit: [advancecareplanning.ca](http://advancecareplanning.ca)

### Association québécoise pour le droit de mourir dans la dignité (AQDMD)

For more information about the right to die with dignity, visit: [aqdmd.org/en/](http://aqdmd.org/en/)

### Portail Santé Montérégie

For more information about palliative and end-of-life care, scan the QR code.



Brochure “Life’s Last Few Moments...” which contains answers to your other questions about end-of-life care.

This booklet is inspired by the pamphlet *L'aide médicale à mourir - Mieux comprendre les étapes*, published by the CHUM.