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McGill University
Health Centre

Medical Aid in Dying (MAiD) Frequently asked questions

DETAILED VERSION

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1. What is Medical Aid in Dying (MAiD)?



Medical aid in dying (MAiD) is when a doctor or nurse practitioner gives medication to a person at their request, to relieve their constant and unbearable suffering by bringing about their death.

2. Who can receive MAiD?

To receive MAiD, you must meet ALL the conditions below:

✓ Have Quebec health insurance

✓ Be 18 years old or older.

✓ Be in constant and unbearable physical or psychological suffering that cannot be relieved in a way that you find acceptable.

✓ Be in one of the following situations:

- suffer from a serious and incurable illness that is characterized by an advanced and irreversible decline in capability*
- have a serious physical impairment causing significant and enduring disabilities*

** A mental illness alone is not considered an illness or disability.*

✓ Be able to consent to care which means you can:

- understand your health situation,
- understand the information given by healthcare professionals,
- and
- make decisions.

3. Can I have MAiD if I am not at the end of life?

Yes. People who have a serious illness and who are suffering unbearably can now request MAiD if they meet all the conditions above. There are different rules depending on if your death is foreseeable (see question 10, “*What are the steps in the MAiD process?*” on page 7).

4. What does it mean for death to be foreseeable?

In Quebec, this usually means that doctors/nurse practitioners think you have less than 18 months to live. It is up to the doctors/nurse practitioners who will assess you to decide if your death is foreseeable.

5. Where does MAiD take place?

MAiD can be provided at home or at the hospital. It is up to you, in collaboration with your healthcare team, to decide which is best for you. If you would like MAiD at home, talk to your health care team who will help you arrange this..

If you are still living at home, but want MAiD in the hospital, you will have to come into the hospital for two MAiD assessments. If you are eligible for MAiD, we will make arrangements to admit you to the hospital for the MAiD procedure. People are usually admitted to the hospital either the day before, or the same day, as the MAiD procedure.

Regardless of whether you chose MAiD at home or in the hospital, you will still have a total of at least two assessments to confirm whether or not you are eligible for MAiD.

6. What if I am not eligible for MAiD?

The doctor/nurse practitioner will tell you and explain the reasons why. Your healthcare team will work with you to find other ways to relieve your suffering. If your condition changes, you can also ask for your request to be re-evaluated.

7. What other options are available to reduce my suffering or for end-of-life care?

There are many different options that may help reduce suffering and improve your quality of life. Depending on your condition, this can include:

Different medical treatments

Your doctor or nurse practitioner may suggest stopping treatments or starting new treatments that have the potential to reduce suffering and improve quality of life.

Palliative care

Palliative care aims to relieve suffering, help you have the best quality of life possible, and provide you and your family and friends with support at the end of life. Palliative care can be offered by your healthcare team or by palliative care specialists.

Continuous palliative sedation

In some situations, for a person at the end of life with a short prognosis it may be impossible to achieve adequate relief of suffering and pain despite high quality palliative care. Continuous palliative sedation is the use of sedative medication to relieve suffering by keeping the person unconscious (asleep) until death.

Psychological support

Psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers and spiritual care professionals are available to support your emotional needs and help you cope and come to terms with end of life.

Pain and symptom control

Specialists from different areas (doctors, psychologists, physiotherapists) work together to reduce pain and improve quality of life for patients.

Hospice care

Hospice care aims to relieve suffering and improve the quality of life for people with a life limiting illness, as well as their families and friends.

Spiritual care

Spiritual care professionals offer emotional and spiritual support to you and your friends and family.

It is important to speak with your healthcare team about your feelings and preferences as soon as possible so they can help find the best options for you.

8. If I have a mental health condition but no physical condition, can I request MAiD?

No. MAiD is not permitted for people who only have a mental health condition.

9. How long does the MAiD process take?

MAiD is a process that takes time and planning. If you are thinking about MAiD or end-of-life care, speak with your healthcare team. It is important not to leave it to the last minute.

10. What are the steps in the MAiD process?



a. Get information

Ask a member of your healthcare team (doctor, nurse practitioner, nurse, social worker, etc.) for information about MAiD. They will answer your questions about the process and go over the different care options available to you. This first step provides you with information and helps you reflect on your wishes.

b. Make a written request

If you decide to ask for MAiD, you will have to sign a form. You can get this form from a member of the healthcare team.

You must date and sign the form in front of witnesses. If you cannot physically sign the form, someone else can do it for you – there are rules about this that your healthcare team will explain to you.

You must make the request without anybody pressuring you and only after you have been given all the information you need to make your decision. You can also change your mind at any point in the MAiD process.

c. Medical assessment

After making the written request, you will be seen by two doctors or nurse practitioners. They will talk to you about your medical condition and explore all your care and treatment options. They will also see if you meet all the conditions for MAiD. Speak to the doctors/nurse practitioners about your preferences and concerns and ask them any questions you have.

If your death is foreseeable	If your death is not foreseeable
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- There is no waiting period between the MAiD assessment and the day MAiD is provided. It is up to you in collaboration with your MAiD provider to choose the MAiD date.- If you have been approved for MAiD and the MAiD provider thinks you are at risk of losing your ability to consent, you can enter into a written agreement called a Waiver of Final Consent with the doctor/nurse practitioner to have MAiD provided on or before a specific day. This agreement is valid even if you lose your ability to consent afterwards.- For more information, see question 20, <i>What is a “Waiver of Final Consent”?</i> on page 13.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- There is a 90 day waiting period between your first MAiD evaluation and the day MAiD is provided.- You have to be able to provide consent to MAiD on the day of the procedure. There is no written agreement called a Waiver of Final Consent allowed.- Both doctors/nurse practitioners need to agree that you have given serious thought to the options available to relieve your suffering.- One of the doctors/nurse practitioners must have knowledge of the illness that is causing your suffering.

d. Preparation

If the two doctors/nurse practitioners agree that you are approved to have MAiD, preparations for the day of MAiD can begin. It is up to you and the MAiD provider to decide on the day and time MAiD will be provided. Members of the healthcare team are there to support you throughout the process.

- [Social worker](#): Can help you organize your affairs, including providing information and resources on wills and testaments.
- [Music therapist](#): May be available to use meaningful music for emotional support and life-review or music that provides comfort and relaxation.
- [Nursing](#): Can provide you with pain and symptom control and support you and your family members throughout the MAiD process.
- [Spiritual care professional](#): Can provide emotional and spiritual support to you and your family members.
- [Psychologist](#): May be available to help you if you are experiencing feelings of depression, anxiety or fear, or if you would like to speak with someone about your thoughts and feelings.

e. On the day of MAiD

Your family or friends can stay with you before, during and after the MAiD procedure. When you are ready, the MAiD provider will give you the medications. The medications are given intravenously (through a vein). The MAiD provider will stay at the bedside until your death.

More information is available in the MUHC booklets

- *After a MAiD request has been approved: Information for patients*
- *After a MAiD request has been approved: Information for families and friends*

11. Can I change my mind?

Yes. You can change your mind at any time right up until MAiD is provided.

12. Who provides MAiD? Who is my MAiD provider?

In Quebec, a doctor or nurse practitioner provides MAiD with support from the rest of the healthcare team. At the MUHC, the doctor or nurse practitioner who provides MAiD is usually someone who specializes in MAiD and may be different than your treating doctor or nurse practitioner. The doctor or nurse practitioner who evaluates you and gives you the MAiD medication is called the MAiD provider.

In the rest of Canada, the MAiD provider can prescribe medication which the patient will then take themselves, leading to their death. This is not allowed in Quebec.

Doctors, nurse practitioners and healthcare professionals cannot ignore your questions or your request for MAiD. If they choose not to provide MAiD, they must tell you and make sure that another healthcare professional at the MUHC will quickly follow up on your MAiD request.

13. What if I don't want to tell anyone about my decision to ask for MAiD?

It is up to you to decide who to share the decision with. While it is a good idea to speak about MAiD with those close to you because your death will impact them, some people may find this difficult. Your healthcare team is there to support and help you if you have concerns about telling others about your decision.

By law, you have the right to keep the decision to have MAiD private. Members of your healthcare team will respect this. The death certificate will not say MAiD on it.



14. What if my family does not agree with my MAiD decision?

Some people may disagree with your decision to have MAiD. They may object for religious reasons, they may not be ready to say goodbye or they may want you to try other treatments instead. However, your family cannot stop you if you have been judged eligible for MAiD and you have decided to proceed. These situations can be very difficult for everyone involved.

Your healthcare team, including the social worker, physician, spiritual care professional and nurses are there to support you and your family members.

15. Can children be present in the room during MAiD?

This is up to you and your family, along with your healthcare team, to decide. If this is something you are wondering about, please speak with a member of your healthcare team. They can also give you resources and advice about how to speak to children and teens about MAiD.



16. Will having MAiD affect my insurance policy?

No. Insurance companies cannot discriminate against you because you have chosen MAiD.

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

Some people who chose to have MAiD may also be able to donate their organs or tissues. If this is something that interests you, please speak to a member of your healthcare team.



18. Can I ask for MAiD in advance (for example in an advance medical directive or living will)?

Quebec passed a law in 2023 that will eventually allow people diagnosed with dementia or Alzheimer's disease to request MAiD for a time in the future. However, this is still not permitted in Quebec at this time.

19. Can I request MAiD for a family member?

No. A MAiD request can only be made by the person who wishes to receive it. The request has to be made freely and the person should not be pressured by others to make the decision.

20. What is a “Waiver of Final Consent”?

If your death is reasonably foreseeable, you have been approved for MAiD, and your MAiD provider thinks that you are at risk of losing capacity to make decisions before the MAiD date, it is possible to sign a written agreement (called a “waiver of final consent”) with your MAiD provider to have MAiD provided on or before a specific date. This agreement is valid even if you lose your ability to consent afterwards.

Here are some things to know about this

- You must be able to consent to care when you sign the written agreement.
- The MAiD provider must believe you are at risk of losing the ability to give consent on or before the date of MAiD.
- The written agreement must be completed within 90 days of the MAiD date.
- If you show by words or gestures if you don't want the MAiD provider to give you the medications, MAiD will not be provided, even if you signed the waiver of final consent.

21. What if the healthcare team is not listening to my request for MAiD or if I have a complaint about the MAiD process?

Doctors, nurse practitioners, and healthcare professionals cannot ignore your questions or your request for MAiD. If they choose not to provide MAiD, they must tell you and make sure that another healthcare professional at the MUHC will quickly follow up on your MAiD request.

If you have a complaint or are unhappy with how you or your family member is being treated during the MAiD process, speak with your healthcare team or with the MUHC Ombudsman. The Ombudsman investigates and helps to resolve issues and complaints.

You can reach the Ombudsman by:

Email	ombudsman@muhc.mcgill.ca	
Telephone	Montreal General Hospital	514-934-1934, ext. 44285
	Glen, Royal Victoria Hospital, Lachine Hospital, & Camille Lefebvre Pavilion	514-934-1934, ext. 35655
	Montreal Chest Institute & Montreal Neurological Hospital	514-934-1934, ext. 22223
Mail	MUHC Office of the Ombudsman	E6.164 – 1650 Cedar Ave. Montreal, QC H3G 1A4

22. What are some resources I can look at if I want to learn more?

More information on what to expect after a request for MAiD has been approved is available in the MUHC's After a request for MAiD has been approved information booklets. The booklets are available online and from your healthcare team. A shorter version of this FAQ sheet is also available.

The McGill University Health Centre webpage has many different resources (books, links to websites, etc.) on a variety of topics, including: MAiD, end-of-life care, talking about death and dying, grief, emotional health, and advance care planning (living wills, etc.).

You can find these resources on the McGill University Health Centre website on the End-of-Life Care webpage
www.muhc.ca/patients/end-life-care-mcgill-university-health-centre.)

For more resources and information on MAiD and end-of-life care, we invite you to visit the MUHC McConnell Resource Centre's End of Life webpage
www.muhclibraries.ca/end-of-life

You can also contact one of the MUHC's patient resource centres to speak to a librarian. They can help you find reliable health information and resources:

Montreal Children's Hospital
Family Resource Centre & Library
(resources for children and on parenting)
bibliofam@muhc.mcgill.ca
www.mchfamilylibrary.ca

Montreal Neurological Hospital
InfoNEURO : Neuro-Patient Resource Centre
infoeuro@muhc.mcgill.ca
www.infoeuro.mcgill.ca

Glen Site & Montreal General Hospital
McConnell Patient Resource Centre
crp-prc@muhc.mcgill.ca
www.muhclibraries.ca/patients

Glen Site - Cancer Mission
Cedars CanSupport Resource Centre
cedarscansupport@muhc.mcgill.ca
www.cansupport.ca/resource-centre-services

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Important: The information provided in this document is for educational purposes. It is not intended to replace the advice of a professional healthcare practitioner or to substitute for medical care. Contact a qualified healthcare practitioner if you have any questions about your care.

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