

# Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD)

## A Guide to Support People Requesting MAiD

This guide answers questions you and your loved ones might have after considering MAiD. It also gives information about what to do or think about in the days before MAiD happens.

You might feel grief or sadness thinking about the end of your life and about saying goodbye to your loved ones. You might also feel relieved to have some control over how and when you will die. You have likely put a great deal of thought into considering MAiD.

By this time, you may have completed the Request for MAiD form. The next step is to have two separate doctors or nurse practitioners assess you – we call these people your assessors.



### The process going forward

Most often, there is no waiting period before you can go ahead with the procedure once your assessors agree you meet all the criteria. In some situations, there is a 90- day waiting period before the procedure can happen. This time starts from the date of the first medical assessment.

Through the whole process from requesting MAiD to being assessed, we encourage you to focus on and think about the people and activities that you enjoy most.

If you have questions or worries, you can talk to your family, friends, or healthcare providers.

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Here are some questions for you to think about:

- What do I most want to do (practical tasks, outings, projects, bucket list)?
  - How would I like to spend this time (alone or with others or a combination?)
  - Who do I want to see and what is important for me to say to these people?
  - What memories or stories do I want to share (highlights, achievements, regrets)?
  - How do I want to share my memories or stories (oral, written, or recorded)?
  - What do I need or want help with and who can do that?
  - Do I have worries or anxieties that I want to talk about?
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You can also call the **MAiD Care Coordination Centre** for support.

Telephone  
Email

604-587-7878  
mccc@fraserhealth.ca

## Setting the date for MAiD

Once you are approved for MAiD, you can choose where and when you want it to take place. You can choose to wait to set the date for the procedure and see how your disease progresses. Or, you might have been thinking about this for a long time and have a date already in mind. If there is a chance you could lose your ability to give your final consent and your natural death is expected in the near future, talk with your MAiD doctor or nurse practitioner about signing “Waiver of Final Consent”.

You can talk about your plan and wishes with your assessors. Most importantly, you can stop or put this process ‘on hold’ at any time. You direct the plan.

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Some questions to think about when the date is set:

- Do I want to arrange for cremation or burial?
  - Do I want to donate my organs or eyes?
  - Do I want to arrange a time for my body to be moved to the funeral home?
  - Does the MAiD provider know my wishes?
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## Preparing for the day of MAiD

Time of love and togetherness might be mixed with times of deep sadness. Take time and space to rest when you need it.

Be patient and generous with yourself and others. Be flexible and open to changes. If your plan no longer feels right, it’s okay to change it.



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Some questions about the day of MAiD to think about:

- Do I have any questions about what to expect or what I can or cannot do at this time?
  - What other healthcare providers will be there to assist?
  - What time of day do I want the MAiD to happen?
  - Where do I want the MAiD to happen?
  - Who would I like to be present during the MAiD? Have I talked with them?
  - What do I want to do, see, eat, or feel on this day?
  - What would I like to wear?
  - Where would I like people to be in relation to me (sitting or lying next to me, holding hands with me, nearby, in or out of my sight)?
  - If there are children or pets, where would I like them to be?
  - Is there anything I want to happen before the MAiD medication is given (a kiss or hug, a ritual or prayer, music, or a favourite reading)?
  - Do my loved ones have a clear idea of my wishes for the day?
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## When the MAiD medication is given

When the MAiD doctor or nurse practitioner arrives, they make sure that you still want MAiD. They talk about the process with you and those who have gathered. You then sign a final consent if you are able to do so. If you have arranged for and have previously signed “Waiver of Final Consent”, MAiD proceeds according to your wishes.

A nurse is there to be with you and start an intravenous, if needed. The MAiD doctor or nurse practitioner gives you medication the way that you asked (by mouth or by injection) to cause sedation and death.

Some people worry that they will lose bowel and bladder control. This is rare. Your breathing changes and you might have deep breaths and/or snores. Eventually, your breathing stops. The MAiD doctor or nurse practitioner then confirms your death.

# Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD) A Guide to Support Families and Friends

When someone close to you has asked for MAiD, it is normal to have different feelings and reactions. Even if you support the choice, it is okay to have conflicting thoughts and emotions. This is a normal part of grief and loss.

Remember that your views come from your own beliefs and life experiences. They might not be the same as those of your loved one who is choosing MAiD.

If you strongly oppose to this choice, it might be helpful to find other people or professionals who can listen to you or give you support. You can also contact the MAiD Care Coordination Centre.

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Before your loved one's assisted death, it can be helpful to think about these questions:

- How would I like to spend time with my friend or family member who is choosing MAiD?
- What is important for us to see or do together (intimacy, sharing stories, travel)?
- What is important for us to say to each other (words of love, forgiveness, gratitude, encouragement)?
- What would I like to know about them that I don't yet?
- What can I do to support my loved one (errands, paperwork, organizing caregivers or just being present)?
- Who can support me during this difficult time (for emotional support or help with planning and communication)?
- What can I do to keep calm and healthy (exercise, time with friends or pets, eating and sleeping regularly)?

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You might not always know what to say or do. If you say or do something you later regret, it is okay to apologize, to offer and/or ask for forgiveness. Social workers or counsellors might be available to help with difficult conversations.



## What to expect for the day of MAiD

People who witness the death might leave the room after or want to stay for some time. If you witness the death, you might feel anxious, upset, calm or relieved. Any of these feelings are natural. Try to sit comfortably and focus on your breathing. Breathe deeply and steadily.

When family and friends are ready, a nurse removes medical devices and items from the body. This includes needles, catheters, hearing aids and jewelry that aren't meant to stay with the body after death.

Plans are made beforehand if your loved one has decided to donate their eyes, organs or body.

You might be asked to call the funeral home. This is to tell them the death has happened and the body is ready to be moved, if you haven't already made plans for a specific time for pick up. There might be a 1 to 3 hour wait from when they are first called before your loved one is moved to the funeral home.

If the death happens in the hospital or long-term care home, care providers usually wrap the body. You can help if you wish, but it is not required.

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Here are some questions about the day of MAiD for you to think about:

- Who, if anyone, do I want to be with me after the death?
  - What, if anything, is important for me to do in the time right after the death?
  - How much time do I want to have with the body before it is moved to the funeral home?
  - What clothes, personal belongings, or special items do I want cremated or buried with my loved one?
  - If the death does not happen at home, is there someone who can pick me up and drive me home?
  - What, if anything, do I need or want to do in the first few days after the death?
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### Grief after MAiD has happened

Grief is all the feelings you experience when someone you care about dies. It includes different feelings, like sadness, anger, fear, gratitude, and relief. Your feelings might surprise or frustrate you. What you feel is your body's way of dealing with the death of someone important to you and it is important to let it happen.

Grief is natural and no two experiences are the same. Try to continue your regular routine and activities with your friends and family as much as possible. This can help you adjust to life without your loved one being there with you.

Over time, your grief will change. It might feel less intense, or it can come and go. For some people, grief is very difficult and they might neglect their health or hurt themselves. If you have any of these thoughts, talk to your doctor or a grief counsellor.

While many people accept MAiD, you might still find people who disagree with it. They might make hurtful comments or withdraw their care and attention. You can still reach out and find support if you need it through your local hospice society.

For a list of grief counselling and support services:

- go to [patienteduc.fraserhealth.ca](http://patienteduc.fraserhealth.ca) and search 'grief counselling', or
- scan this QR code

**Note:** A QR code is a type of barcode that you scan with your smart device's camera. Once scanned, it takes you to that web page.

