

### Our mission

To maintain, improve, and restore the health and well-being of the Québec population by making accessible an array of integrated and quality health and social services, while contributing to the social and economic development of Québec.

### Our vision

Accessible and efficient health care and services that adapt to the needs of Québécois.

### Our goals

The CISSS de la Montérégie-Ouest achieves its goals through its innovative approaches and stands apart through:

- its exemplary offer of care and integrated services based on interdisciplinarity, accessibility, and adaptability to the needs of its population;
- its willingness to question and improve its professional, clinical, and administrative practices;
- its appreciation of its personnel and the implementation of human resource management practices;
- its strong relationships with its partners.

### Our values

Our actions are guided by five equal and interconnected values:

- Compassion;
- Collaboration;
- Commitment;
- Confidence;
- Consistency.

# MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

To better guide you



[santemonteregie.qc.ca/ouest](https://santemonteregie.qc.ca/ouest)

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

In a context of advanced illness, when death is inevitable, health care institutions provide a comprehensive vision of palliative and end-of-life care. Several options are available to the public, and medical assistance in dying is one.

If medical assistance in dying becomes an option you would like to explore, below are the necessary steps toward granting your request. Note that legal requirements govern medical assistance in dying.

Members of your care team are available at all times 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.

## What is medical assistance in dying?

In Québec, medical assistance in dying is care consisting of a doctor who administers medications or substances to a person at the end of their life, at their request, in order to relieve suffering by precipitating their death (Gouvernement du Québec, 2015). It is a medical procedure governed by the Act respecting end-of-life care, passed into law on December 1, 2015.

## Who can access medical assistance in dying?

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

- Be insured within the meaning of Québec's Health Insurance Act.
- Be at least 18 years old.
- Be able to consent to care, that is, be able to understand the situation and the information provided by health professionals, and be able to make decisions.
- Have a critical and incurable disease.
- Have a medical condition that is characterized by an advanced and irreversible decline in their faculties.
- Be experiencing constant, unbearable physical or psychological suffering that cannot be alleviated under conditions considered tolerable.

## How is an application for medical assistance in dying processed?

Note that you can terminate the application process for medical assistance in dying at any time.

**Below are the steps in an application for medical assistance in dying.**

### 1 Request for information

This involves asking for information about medical assistance in dying from a member of your care team:

- Doctor
- Nurse
- Social worker
- Other professional

These professionals are qualified to answer your questions. They will also inform you of the different options for palliative care and services available to you.

No doctor or professional can refuse to discuss a request for medical assistance in dying.

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

### 2 Written application

If you wish to make an official application, talk to a member of your care team, who will guide you through the different steps. You will need to sign and date an application for medical assistance in dying in the presence of a health professional who is a member of an authorized professional order, and in the presence of an independent witness.

The application must be made by the person concerned, namely you, in a voluntary and informed manner.

That means:

- Without any pressure from the family circle or medical staff;
- Being in possession of all the information needed to make a decision.

### 3 Medical assessment

Once you sign your application, two different doctors will perform a medical assessment. The doctors will each speak to you and determine whether your situation meets all the criteria set out in the law providing access to medical assistance in dying. These meetings are important so that you can explain the reasons for your request and specify all your needs.



### 3 Medical assessment – cont.

After confirmation from both doctors that your situation meets all the criteria, the process continues. There are two possible outcomes depending on the medical assessments:

#### **Reasonably foreseeable natural death**

- There is no legislated waiting period following two conclusive medical assessments.
- You may complete the consent in case of incapacity. This is a written agreement between you and the doctor providing for the administration of the medications required for medical assistance in dying in anticipation that you will no longer be able to consent at the time of care.

#### **Not reasonably foreseeable natural death**

- 90-day delay between one of the two doctors involved becoming aware of your file and administration of the medication.
- You may not complete the consent in case of incapacity: You must be capable of consenting until the end of the process.

If one of the doctors determines that you are not eligible, your application will be refused and the process will be suspended. Rest assured, your doctor and the care team will continue to take care of you according to your treatment plan. However, if your clinical condition changes, you may submit a second application.

### 4 Preparation

If the medical assessments conclude that you meet all the criteria required by the Act, the doctor who will provide medical assistance in dying will plan the desired course of action with you.

These 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 route 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 and 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 appointed day

The doctor and the care team will try to make your last 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.

When the time comes, the doctor will ask again if you still want to receive medical assistance in dying. After obtaining your consent and making sure you are ready, the doctor will begin intravenous administration of the medications needed for the procedure. The first medication is a sedative that will help you relax; the second one will send you into a deep artificial coma and cause you to stop breathing. The third is a neuromuscular blocker. It will stop your heart, after which you will die. The procedure is brief and completely painless. It does not cause any suffering.

The doctor, a member of the care team, and your loved ones will be by your side until your death. Your loved ones may be given a bereavement kit, which includes a list of community bereavement resources and helpful 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 assistance in dying, contact one of the professionals in your care team or the palliative care nurse consultant in your area:

### Contact information

#### Contact information for the palliative care nurse consultant

- **Jardins-Roussillon**  
450-699-2425, ext. 4292
- **Haut-Saint-Laurent**  
450-829-2321, ext. 1323
- **Suroît**  
450-371-9920, ext. 2446
- **Vaudreuil-Soulanges**  
579-491-8792 | 579-490-3354

## Useful resources

### Government website

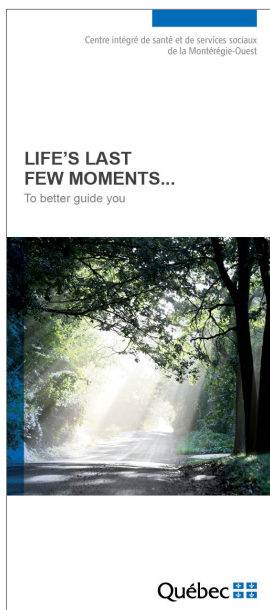
To learn more about the medical assistance in dying, go to [quebec.ca/en](http://quebec.ca/en), click on Health, then on Health system and services, then on End-of-Life Care.

### Advance-care-planning

For more information on advance care planning, visit [advancecareplanning.ca](http://advancecareplanning.ca) and [kingstonhsc.ca/advance-care-planning-0](http://kingstonhsc.ca/advance-care-planning-0).

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

For more information on the right to die with dignity, visit: <https://aqdmd.org/>



Other answers to your questions about end-of-life care can be found in the booklet entitled "Life's Last Few Moments...".

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