



MORE INFORMATION

For more information, please consult the government of Québec website at the following address: <https://www.quebec.ca/en/health/health-system-and-services/end-of-life-care/medical-aid-in-dying>

CENTRE INTÉGRÉ DE SANTÉ ET DE SERVICES SOCIAUX DE LA CÔTE-NORD

The Centre intégré de santé et de services sociaux (CISSS) de la Côte-Nord serves a population of roughly 90 000 inhabitants on a territory that stretches from Tadoussac to Blanc-Sablon (nearly 1300 km of coastline), and includes Anticosti and the northern towns of Fermont and Schefferville.

The CISSS de la Côte-Nord is responsible for planning, coordinating, organizing and providing health and social services to the entire population of the region. It includes about 50 facilities and over 4000 employees.

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**Centre intégré
de santé
et de services sociaux
de la Côte-Nord**

Québec 

MEDICAL AID IN DYING

**Care under the
*Act respecting end-of-life care***

DIRECTION DES SERVICES
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WHAT IS MEDICAL AID IN DYING?

Sometimes, despite the palliative care and support provided to people at the end of life, some suffering is not adequately relieved. In such cases, medical aid in dying may be an option for someone for whom all other options are deemed unsatisfactory.

The *Act respecting end-of-life care*, effective December 10, 2015 and revised in 2021, defines medical aid in dying as “care consisting in the administration by a physician of medications or substances to an end-of-life patient, at the patient’s request, in order to relieve their suffering by hastening death.”

WHO CAN RECEIVE IT?

The *Act respecting end-of-life care* specifies the eligibility criteria for medical aid in dying. Since March 2021, these criteria have changed. The person must:

- ▶ be insured under the *Health Insurance Act*;
- ▶ be of full age (over 18 years old) and capable of giving consent to care;
- ▶ suffer from a serious and incurable illness;
- ▶ Be in an advanced state of irreversible decline in capability;
- ▶ experience constant, unbearable physical or psychological suffering, which cannot be relieved in a manner they find tolerable.

The person concerned must make the request in a free and informed manner, i.e., it must not be made under external pressure or threats.

Only a person who meets all the criteria may obtain medical aid in dying.

The *Act* now includes safeguards that must be followed by the physician. These vary depending on whether your natural death is foreseeable, that is, if the end of your life is approaching in the near future, or if your natural death is not foreseeable.

Each person’s trajectory towards death is unique and not always predictable. This is why the physician must consider your clinical situation and assess whether or not you are nearing the end of your life.

WHAT ARE THE STEPS IN THE APPLICATION PROCESS?

Please note that at any time during the process, you can withdraw your request and end the process.

1. The request for information

You may, at any time, ask a member of the care team (physician, nurse, social worker, etc.) for information on medical aid in dying. Do not hesitate to share your thoughts and concerns with them. The health care professionals must answer your questions about the process or refer you to a colleague who can.

2. The written request

If you would like to make a formal request, there is a form for this purpose. You must sign and date it in the presence of a health care professional and an independent witness. Ask a health care professional to help you with this step.

3. The medical assessment

In the days following the signing of the form, you will be assessed by two physicians who must confirm that you are eligible for medical aid in dying. Do not hesitate to ask them questions or express your concerns. Your request will be denied if one of the physicians determines that you are ineligible. The reasons for the refusal and other possible therapeutic options will be presented to you.

PLANNING

A psychosocial support worker will be assigned to your situation to accompany you and your loved ones throughout the entire process.

In collaboration with your care team, you can plan the day you would like it to happen, the setting (home, hospital, etc.), who you would like to be present and if you would like any rituals, in particular.

It is important for you to ensure that your legal documents are completed according to your wishes.

ON THE DAY OF ADMINISTRATION

A few hours in advance, the nurse will install a venous line so the medication can be administered.

When the time comes, the physician will confirm your capacity to consent and that you still wish to receive medical aid in dying. In some situations, and under specific conditions, consent immediately before care is no longer required. Your physician can determine if this applies to your situation and discuss it with you beforehand.

After obtaining your consent, the physician will administer three medications intravenously:

- ▶ The first medication is to relax you.
- ▶ The second will induce a deep coma state.
- ▶ The third will cause respiratory arrest, cardiac arrest and death.

The process, from the beginning to the end of the administration of medication, takes about 10 minutes.

The physician will remain at your bedside until your death.