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# **MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING: HOW TO PROPERLY SUPPORT YOUNG PEOPLE**



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**Canada**

## What is Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID) ?

**MAID is governed by the Act Respecting End-of-Life Care, as is palliative care. MAID is available to those individuals for whom all therapeutic, curative and palliative options have been deemed unsatisfactory.**

MAID is the intravenous administration of drugs by a qualified health care practitioner to a consenting person who requests it, with the goal of causing death. MAID is an exceptional intervention with very restrictive conditions. The patient must:

- Have a serious and incurable illness or have a severe physical impairment resulting in significant and persistent disability;
- Have a medical situation characterized by an advanced and irreversible decline in their abilities;
- Endure physical or mental suffering that is unbearable and cannot be relieved under conditions considered tolerable.

MAID is still under consideration. As a result, eligibility criteria may change over time.

## How do I explain MAID to a young person ?

**Explain to the youth that the person has a serious and incurable illness.**

«Grandpa has lung cancer, it's a serious disease and it can't be cured. Grandpa will soon die, as he asked.»

**Explain the law that exists in Quebec and the choice made regarding MAID:**

«In Quebec, there is a law that allows those who are going to die or who have a serious physical problem that will never again let them function properly to die in a way other than natural. I decided to choose this treatment. With the assessment and authorization of two health professionals, I choose when, how and with whom I will die. MAID is a series of injections that will stop my body from working. It doesn't hurt.»

**Treat all age groups in the same fashion: explain the situation to all the young people in the family at the same time and then check individually what each one has understood**

**S - Simplicity:** Use language that is simple and understandable for the age of the young person.

**C - Comprehension check:** Check what the young person has understood.

**D - Details:** Provide more details, depending on the young person's questions.





## The intervention in detail

- The request for MAID is made by the sick person orally and in writing.
- It is evaluated by 2 health professionals who are competent in the field.
- The applicant can always change their mind.
- Before proceeding, the physician revalidates the applicant's wish to obtain MAID.

### The doctor carries out the MAID by means of 4 intravenous injections:

1. Saline water that facilitates the flow of fluids through the body;
2. A drug that puts the person to sleep;
3. A drug that puts the person in a coma;
4. A drug that causes death from respiratory arrest..

The entire procedure takes 5 to 7 minutes.



## How to include young people in the process

- Inform the young person of the sick person's decision.
- Tell the young person when the MAID is scheduled for.
- If the sick person asks for the young person to be present during the procedure, give the young person the choice of being present or not at the time of death, regardless of age.
- Allow the young person to change their mind at any time, even when it is time to administer the MAID.
- If the ill person does not ask for the young person to be present, the young person may be nearby (e.g., next room) and come in the room after death.
- If you have more than one child, encourage each one to make their own decision.
- Ask your young person regularly whether they have any questions or whether there is anything they would like to know.
- If the young person wishes to attend, explain in detail and in simple, age-appropriate language how the MAID will be administered (who will be present, what medical equipment will be used, how soon death will occur, etc.).
- Whether present during the procedure or not, allow the young person to be present before death. You can invite them to offer a card, to draw a picture or to write a text to the person who will die, etc.

## Managing MAID in the young person's living environment

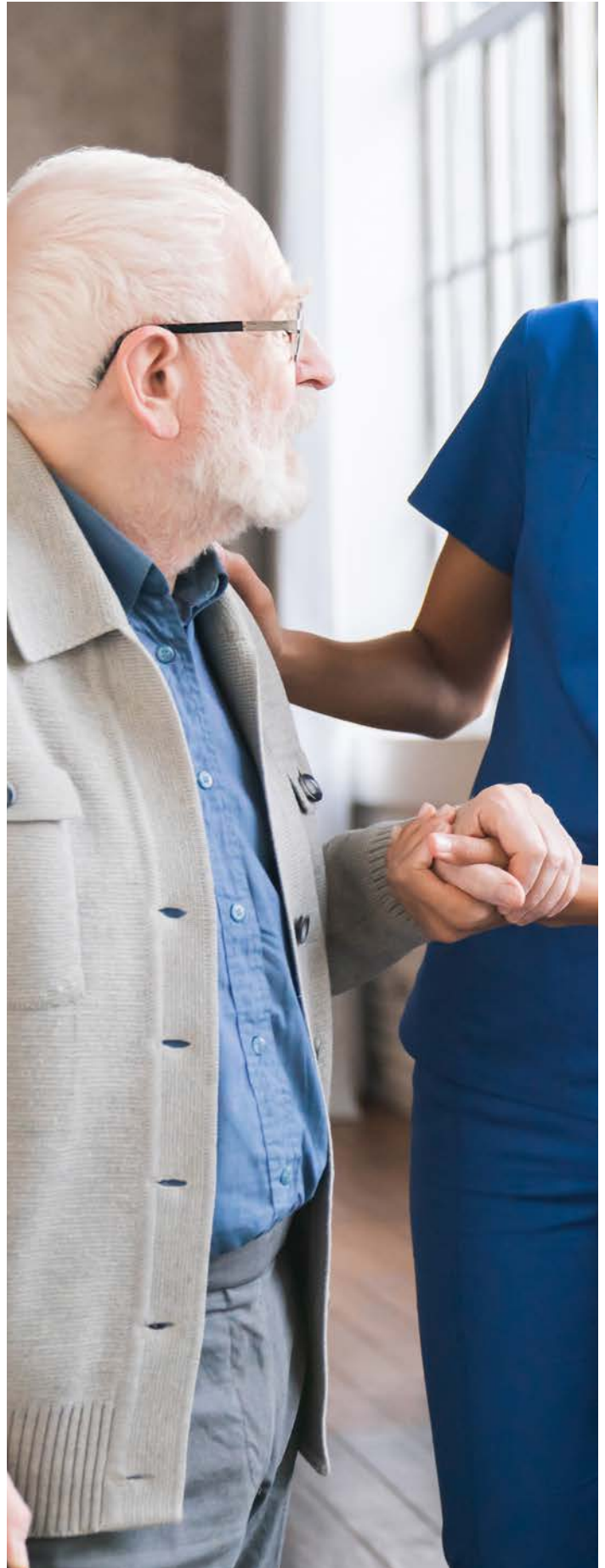
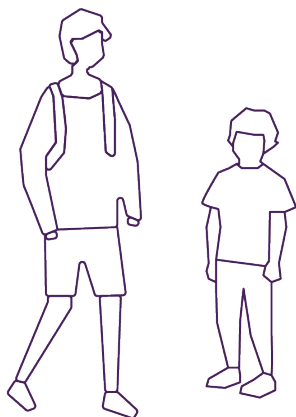
### If the young person is in school or day care during the MAID procedure:

Inform the teachers or staff, plan for support if needed, and ask the young person about their needs. You can suggest examples of help: the young person could be accompanied by a school worker or a friend, they could be alone in a room, there could be a minute of silence in class, things could be business as usual, etc.

### How do you talk to the other students or friends in the day care?

Ask the young person if they want to talk about it and, if so, if they want to do it themselves. MAID is a fact of life. It needs to be talked about, and it should be done in a calm way: people die of their illness through medical assistance in dying, a medication that stops the body from functioning. MAID is a legal form of care and has nothing to do with suicide.

**The young person has the right to talk about it in school or day care, to not talk about it or to ask someone else to talk about it.**





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## Contact us

If you have any questions or would like more personalized assistance, please contact a Deuil-Jeunesse specialist.

Deuil-Jeunesse is here to support you.

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