Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

About Medical Aid in Dying (MAiD)

This information explains Medical Aid in Dying (MAiD). It explains who may be eligible, what to expect if you ask about MAiD, and where to get support.

What is Medical Aid in Dying (MAiD)?

Medical Aid in Dying (MAiD) is an end-of-life option for some adults who are terminally ill,according to doctors. Terminally ill means you have an illness, disease, or health problem that you'll likely die from within 6 months.

If you're eligible for MAiD, you can ask to see a doctor who participates in MAiD. They can prescribe life-ending medicines based on state laws. Once you're prescribed the medicine, you can take it whenever you want to. You should take MAiD medicine yourself at home or in another private place you choose. You can choose whether or not you want to take it, even after you have the prescription.

Choosing whether to ask about MAiD is a personal decision. Your MSK care team will respect your wishes and support you throughout your care.

Who is eligible for MAiD?

MAiD is legal in a few places, including:

- New York
- New Jersey
- Vermont
- Washington, D.C.

Every state has different legal requirements for who is eligible for MAiD and

how the MAiD process works.

You may be eligible for MAiD at MSK if you meet the requirements under New York or New Jersey law. You must:

- Be aged 18 or older.
- Be a resident of New York or New Jersey.
- Have a terminal illness that MSK's MAiD doctors, with input from your MSK oncologist, expect will cause death within 6 months.
- Be getting ongoing care at MSK for your terminal illness. You must have had care at MSK within the past 6 months.
- Be able to make your own healthcare decisions.
- Be able to take the medicine yourself.

If you're not sure if you meet these requirements, talk with your MSK care team.

Who can ask for MAiD?

Only you can ask for MAiD. Family members, caregivers, healthcare agents, and other people cannot ask for MAiD for you. You cannot ask for MAiD through:

- An advanced directive
- A Medical Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment (MOLST) form
- A Physician Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment (POLST) form

What happens if I ask about MAiD?

If you ask about MAiD, your MSK care team will listen to your concerns and answer your questions. They can:

- Explain the MAiD process.
- Help you understand your options.
- Answer your questions.
- Refer you to Supportive Care and other support services.

You may meet with the MAiD clinical team. They'll answer your questions, explain the MAiD process, and help coordinate your care. They work closely with your MSK care team. Your MSK care team will keep managing your cancer care.

Asking about MAiD does not mean you must continue the process.

Will I still get care at MSK?

Yes. If you decide to learn more about MAiD or start the MAiD process, you can keep getting your care at MSK.

Your care team will keep caring for you throughout your treatment. They'll also make sure you and your loved ones get the support you need. They may refer you to one or more of services :

- Supportive Care Service (www.msk.org/supportive-care)
- Social Work Services (www.msk.org/social-work)
- Spiritual Care Services (www.msk.org/spiritual-religious-care)
- Counseling Center (www.msk.org/counseling)
- Integrative Medicine Service (www.msk.org/integrative-medicine)
- Patient Representatives (www.msk.org/patient-rep)

To learn more about support services at MSK, read *MSK Support Services* and *Caregiver Support Services*.

Your care team can help you decide which services are right for you and your family.

Supportive care and end-of-life care

At MSK, we're here to support you at every step of your cancer care. This includes palliative care (also called supportive care) and end-of-life care, such as hospice care.

Palliative care

Palliative care focuses on improving your quality of life through managing your symptoms and giving emotional support. It's an extra layer of support for you and your family.

MSK's palliative care team is made up of doctors, advanced practice providers, nurses, pharmacists, social workers, and chaplains (spiritual counselors). We can help improve your quality of life by focusing on you as a whole person, not just your illness. We'll address your physical, emotional, and spiritual care needs, such as:

- Managing pain and other symptoms and side effects of your cancer treatment.
- Helping you cope with stress and feelings such as fear, sadness, or anger.
- Getting counseling, spiritual support, or both.

Our palliative care team can also help you and your family when you need to make hard decisions about your care. This includes making the choice to stop your cancer treatment and transition to hospice care.

It's important to know that palliative care is not the same as hospice care. Palliative care can start at any point of your cancer care, including while you're getting treatment. Hospice care starts after you stop getting treatment, often when you're near the end of life.

Hospice care

Hospice care is a type of medical care for people who have 6 months or less to live. The goal of hospice care is to ease suffering and provide end-of-life comfort and support to you and your family.

Your primary doctor will tell you if hospice is right for you. You can enter hospice if:

- According to doctors, you have 6 months or less to live.
- According to doctors, your cancer treatment is no longer working and no

other treatments are available.

- You feel your cancer treatment is more of a burden than a help.

You can get hospice care in a few settings, including at home. You can get hospice care in a nursing home, assisted living facility, or hospice center.

Your attending doctor and care team can help guide your transition from MSK to one of our hospice partners. Our partners have teams of healthcare providers with special training in hospice care. They'll take over managing your medical care and make sure you keep getting the best care possible.

To learn more about end-of-life care, read *Toward the End of Life: What You and Your Family Can Expect* and *About Hospice Care*.

Your choices and support

Choosing whether to continue the MAiD process is a personal decision. Whatever you decide, your MSK care team will keep caring for you and supporting you.

- Only you can decide whether to continue the MAiD process.
- You can change your mind at any time.
- You can get the medicine and decide not to take it.
- Your MSK care team will keep supporting you, whatever you decide.
- You can ask questions at any time.

Who should I contact if I have questions about MAiD?

If you have questions about the MAiD process, contact your social worker. You can reach them by calling Social Work Services at 212-639-7020.

If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

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