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PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

# Common Questions About Medical Aid in Dying (MAiD)

This information answers some common questions about Medical Aid in Dying (MAiD).

## What is MAiD?

MAiD is an end-of-life option for people who are terminally ill. Terminally ill means you have an illness, disease, or health condition that, according to doctors, you will likely die from within 6 months.

If you're eligible for MAiD, you can ask a doctor who participates in MAiD to prescribe life-ending medications. You can take these medications at a time of your choosing.

## Am I eligible for MAiD?

MAiD is legal in New Jersey, Vermont, Washington, D.C., and several other states. It is not legal in New York State.

Every state has different legal requirements for who is eligible for MAiD and how the MAiD process works.

To be eligible for MAiD under New Jersey law, you must be:

- A legal resident of New Jersey.
- An adult (18 years of age or older).
- Able to understand and make your own healthcare decisions.
- Diagnosed by qualified doctors as terminally ill. Terminally ill means you

have an illness, disease, or health condition that, according to doctors, you will likely die from within 6 months.

- Able to self-administer (give yourself) the life-ending medications.

## **Who can make a request for MAiD?**

Only patients can make a request for MAiD. Family members, caregivers, and health care agents cannot request MAiD for a patient.

## **Does MSK participate in MAiD?**

No. MSK does not participate in MAiD. Under New Jersey law, it's up to hospitals and healthcare providers to decide whether or not they participate in MAiD. MSK does not participate in MAiD for any patient, even if they live in a state where MAiD is legal, such as New Jersey.

None of our doctors, nurses, or staff members at any MSK location can participate in MAiD. Your attending doctor and everyone else on your care team cannot write or fill prescriptions for life-ending medications. They also cannot sign MAiD Physician Compliance forms or other legal documents required by New Jersey or any other state.

You may be able to get MAiD assistance from other hospitals or healthcare providers, depending on their policies. Ask your care team for more information about this.

## **I understand that MSK does not participate in MAiD. Can I still ask my MSK attending doctor or someone on my care team for information about it?**

Yes. Even though MSK does not participate in MAiD, you can still talk with your care team about it. They can:

- Tell you where to find information about MAiD.

- Help you understand your options and make informed decisions.
- Answer questions you have about MAiD.
- Listen to your concerns, comfort you, and give you support.

## **Can my MSK attending doctor or someone on my care team help me find a doctor who participates in MAiD?**

Your attending doctor and other members of your care team can tell you where to find information about MAiD.

Once you find a doctor outside of MSK who participates in MAiD, have them contact your care team. Your care team will share a copy of your medical records with them.

## **If I'm eligible for MAiD and decide to go through the MAiD process, can I continue to get care at MSK?**

Yes. If you're eligible for MAiD and decide to go through the MAiD process, you do not have to stop receiving care at MSK. You can continue with your treatment plan at MSK, if you choose.

Your care team will still be here for you if you decide to go through the MAiD process. They will make sure you and your family continue to get the support you need. If you need physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual support, they can refer you to support services at MSK. These include:

- [Supportive Care Service](#)
- [Social Work Services](#)
- [Spiritual Care Services](#)
- [Counseling Center](#)
- [Integrative Medicine and Wellness Service](#)

- [Patient Representatives](#)

To learn more about support services at MSK, read *MSK Support Services* ([www.mskcc.org/pe/support](http://www.mskcc.org/pe/support)) and *Caregiver Support Services* ([www.mskcc.org/pe/caregiver-services](http://www.mskcc.org/pe/caregiver-services)).

## What kind of supportive care and end-of-life care does MSK provide?

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 symptom management and emotional support. It provides an extra layer of support for you and your family.

Our 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. This includes addressing your physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual care needs, such as:

- Managing pain and other symptoms and side effects of your cancer treatment.
- Learning how to cope with stress and deal with feelings of fear, sadness, or anger.
- Getting mental health counseling, spiritual support, or both.

Our palliative care team can also help you and your family when hard decisions need to be made 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 attending 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 there are no other treatments available.
- You feel that the burdens of your cancer treatment are greater than the benefits.

You can get hospice care in different settings, including at home. You can also 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. Their team of healthcare providers have special training in hospice care. They will take over managing your medical care and make sure you continue to get 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* ([www.mskcc.org/pe/toward-end-of-life](http://www.mskcc.org/pe/toward-end-of-life)) and *About Hospice Care* ([www.mskcc.org/pe/hospice\\_care](http://www.mskcc.org/pe/hospice_care)).

## Where can I find more information about MAiD?

Here are some resources where you can find more information about MAiD. MSK does not give legal advice or endorse any of these organizations or the materials they provide.

State of New Jersey Department of Health

[www.nj.gov/health/advancedirective/maid](http://www.nj.gov/health/advancedirective/maid)

This site has information about MAiD specific to New Jersey.

### American Clinicians Academy on MAiD

[www.acamaid.org](http://www.acamaid.org)

This site has information and resources to help guide you and your family through the MAiD process. It offers a free booklet that can help you learn more about MAiD and understand your options. It also offers a Patient-to-Doctor Referral System that can refer you to doctors in your area who participate in MAiD.

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](http://www.mskcc.org/pe) to search our virtual library.

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