

NSW Health

Voluntary assisted dying

Easy Read guide



How to use this guide



NSW Health wrote this guide.

When you see the word 'we', it means NSW Health.



We wrote this guide in an easy to read way.

We use pictures to explain some ideas.

Bold

We wrote some important words in **bold**.

Not bold

This means the letters are thicker and darker.



We explain what these words mean.

There is a list of these words on page 36.



This is an Easy Read summary of another guide.

This means it only includes the most important ideas.



You can find the guide on our website.

[www.health.nsw.gov.au/voluntary-assisted-dying/
Pages/first-request-patient-guide.aspx](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/voluntary-assisted-dying/Pages/first-request-patient-guide.aspx)



This is a long document.



You don't need to read it all at once.

You can take your time.



You can ask for help to read this guide.

A friend, family member or support person may be able to help you.

What's in this guide?

About voluntary assisted dying	5
1. Make your first request	9
2. Your first assessment	12
3. Your second assessment	14
4. Fill out your form	15
5. Make your final request	19
6. The final review	21
7. Decide how to take the medication	24
8. Reviewing your information	28
9. Your prescription	29
10. Take the medication	31
11. After you die	33
Support for you	34
Word list	36

About voluntary assisted dying



In New South Wales (NSW) some people can choose to use **voluntary assisted dying**.



Voluntary assisted dying is when a person asks a doctor for help to end their life.

In this guide we explain:



- the 11 steps of voluntary assisted dying



- who is **eligible** for voluntary assisted dying.



To be eligible, you must meet the rules about who can use voluntary assisted dying.

Rules about who can use voluntary assisted dying



You must be at least 18 years old to be eligible for voluntary assisted dying.

You must also be:



- an Australian **citizen** – someone who is a member of a country by law

or



- a **permanent resident** – someone who is allowed to live in Australia, but they are not a citizen.

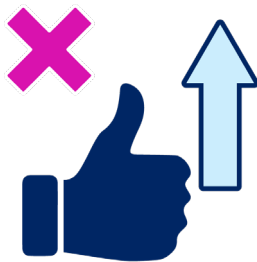


You must have lived in Australia for at least 3 years in a row to be eligible for voluntary assisted dying.



You must have lived in NSW for at least 12 months to be eligible for voluntary assisted dying.

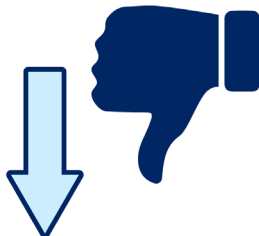
You must have an illness or medical condition that:



- will not get better



- is causing you too much pain



- will keep getting worse.



This means you may only have:

- up to 6 months to live
- or
- up to 12 months to live in some cases.



You must be able to:

- make your own decision to use voluntary assisted dying
- communicate your decision to use voluntary assisted dying.



It must be your choice to use voluntary assisted dying.

No one else can make this decision for you.



A doctor will ask you a number of times if you still want to use voluntary assisted dying.

This is so they can make sure voluntary assisted dying is still your choice.

1. Make your first request



If you decide to use voluntary assisted dying, you need to ask a doctor to help you.

We call this your first request.



No one else can make the first request for you.



But you can use an **interpreter** if you need support to communicate with your doctor.



An interpreter is someone who:

- uses your language
- helps you understand what someone is saying.



You don't need to find an interpreter.

Your doctor will do this for you.



Only people with the right training can be your interpreter.



Your interpreter cannot be a person from your family.



You must be clear when you ask the doctor for voluntary assisted dying.



The doctor will let you know if they accept your first request.



Sometimes a doctor might say no to your first request.

This could be because they:



- have not been a doctor for long enough



- have not done the training for voluntary assisted dying.

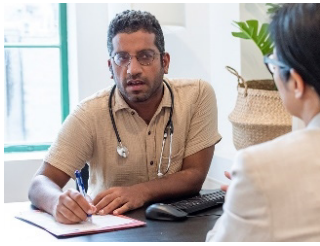


A doctor might also say no to your first request because they don't support voluntary assisted dying.



If a doctor tells you no, you can make a first request with a different doctor.

2. Your first assessment



If a doctor agrees to your first request, they will need to do an **assessment**.

An assessment will help your doctor work out:



- how your illness or medical condition affects your life



- if you are eligible for voluntary assisted dying.



The assessment will be in person.



Your doctor will make sure you are eligible.



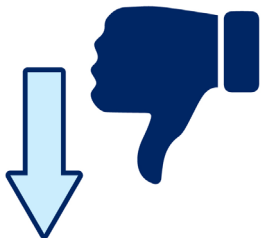
Your doctor will also talk to you about other supports you can use.

For example, **palliative care**.

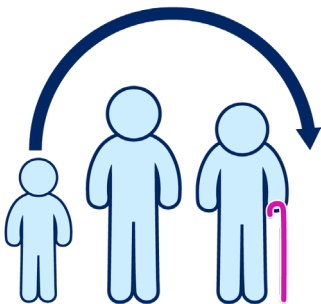


Palliative care is support for when you are near the end of your life.

You use palliative care when you have an illness that:

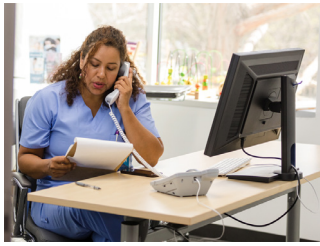


- will get worse



- will last the rest of your life.

3. Your second assessment



After you have done your first assessment, your doctor will organise a second assessment for you.



This assessment will be with a different doctor.

This is because you need 2 doctors to agree that you are eligible to use voluntary assisted dying.



This assessment will also be in person.



If the doctors need more information to do their assessments, they can ask for advice from another health professional.



For example, a **psychologist**.

A psychologist helps people with how they think and feel.

4. Fill out your form



If both doctors decide that you are eligible for voluntary assisted dying, you need to fill out a form.



This form tells your doctor that you want to use voluntary assisted dying.



You will get this form from your doctor.



If you lose your form, you can call the NSW Voluntary Assisted Dying Care Navigator Service for a new form.

1300 802 133



You need to sign your form in front of 2 **witnesses**.



A witness is someone who knows you, such as a:

- friend
- neighbour
- support worker.

A witness can't be:



- someone who is 17 years old or younger



- your family member.



A witness also can't be someone that might gain things you own that have value when you die.

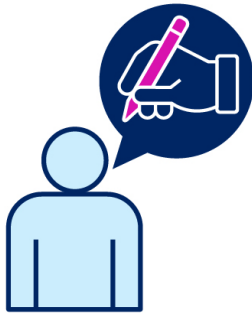


For example, your:

- house
- money.

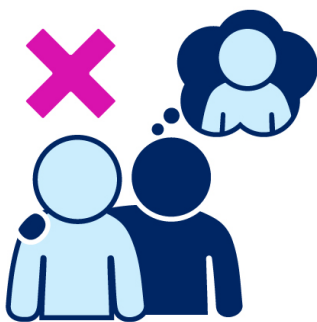


Your witness also can't be your doctor or someone close to your doctor.



If you can't sign your form, you can ask another adult to sign for you.

But they can't be:



- one of your witnesses



- your doctor.



You need to be with the person when they sign your form for you.

You need both your witnesses with you too.



If you can't sign your form physically, you may be able to sign it online.



After you fill out your form, you need to give it to your doctor.

5. Make your final request



You need to tell your doctor that you still want to use voluntary assisted dying.

We call this your final request.



There are rules about when you can make your final request.

These rules give you time to:



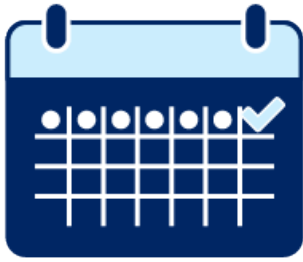
- think about your decision to use voluntary assisted dying



- change your mind if you want to.

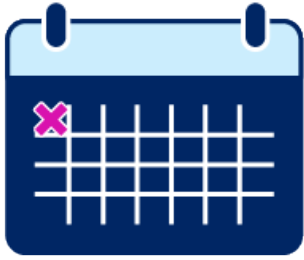


You can change your mind about voluntary assisted dying at any time.



You can make your final request a few days after the day you make your first request.

Your doctor will tell you how many days you must wait.

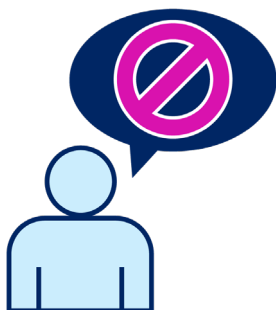


You can't make your final request on the same day as your second assessment.

You may be able to make a final request earlier if your doctor agrees that you could:



- die sooner



- lose your ability to make your own decisions.

6. The final review



Your doctor will **review** your decision after your final request.



When a doctor reviews your decision, they check that you still meet the rules for voluntary assisted dying.



This includes making sure all your documents:

- are ready
- follow the law.

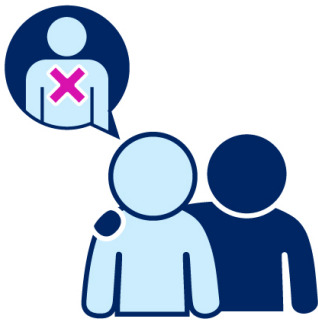
Your doctor will also make sure:



- you can still make your own decisions



- you still want to use voluntary assisted dying



- no one is making you use voluntary assisted dying



- you understand that voluntary assisted dying will end your life.



You don't need to do anything for this step.



But your doctor may contact you to ask you some questions.

7. Decide how to take the medication



After your final review, you need to meet with your doctor to talk about how you want to take the medication that will end your life.

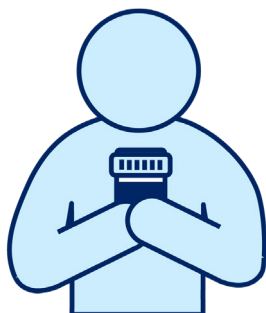
This meeting will be in person.



You must decide how you will take the medication before the next step.



You can have a health professional give you the medication, such as a doctor or a nurse.



Or you can take the medication yourself.



If you choose to take the medication yourself, you must be able to do this without help.



This includes if you eat or drink through a tube.



You must also choose a contact person.

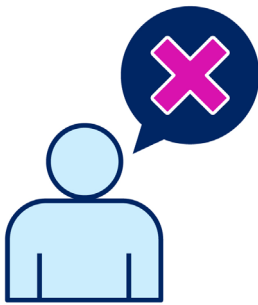


Your contact person must be at least 18 years old and follow certain rules.

For example, they must take any medication you don't use to a hospital pharmacy:



- after you die



- if you decide not to use voluntary assisted dying.

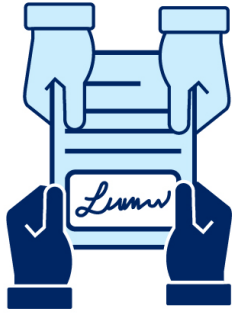


Your contact person must also tell your doctor when you die.



You and your contact person will need to sign a form.

Your doctor will give you this form.



You will need to give the form back to your doctor after you and your contact person have filled it out.



Your doctor will give a copy of the form to the NSW Voluntary Assisted Dying Board.

They are a group of people who make decisions about who can use voluntary assisted dying.



The NSW Voluntary Assisted Dying Board will send information to your contact person.

They will send this information after they decide you are eligible.



This information will explain the rules your contact person must follow.



You must tell your doctor if you need a new contact person.

8. Reviewing your information



Your doctor will send your information to the NSW Voluntary Assisted Dying Board.



The NSW Voluntary Assisted Dying Board will check to make sure:

- you have all the right documents
- your documents follow the law.



If they decide you are eligible, they will tell your doctor that you can use voluntary assisted dying.



You don't need to do anything for this step.

9. Your prescription



Your doctor will write a **prescription** for the medication you need to end your life.



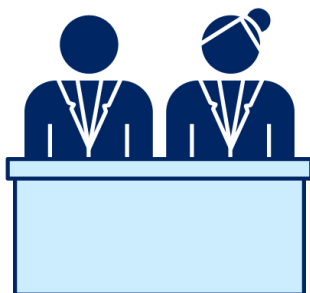
A prescription:

- is a document from your doctor
- tells a **pharmacist** which medication to give you.



A pharmacist is a person who:

- works at a pharmacy
- gives you medicine.



Your doctor will send your prescription to the NSW Voluntary Assisted Dying Pharmacy Service.

In this guide we just call them the Pharmacy Service.

The Pharmacy Service is a group of pharmacists who:



- supply voluntary assisted dying medication



- support people to use voluntary assisted dying medication.



A pharmacist will check the prescription.



You don't need to do anything for this step.

10. Take the medication



You will not be given the medication until you decide you want it.



If you are taking the medication yourself, you need to contact the Pharmacy Service to get the medication.



A pharmacist from the Pharmacy Service will deliver the medication to you.

This pharmacist will also give you information about:



- how to store the medication



- how to take the medication when you are ready to end your life.



If a health professional will give you the medication, you need to contact them when you are ready to take it.



A pharmacist from the Pharmacy Service will deliver the medication to the health professional.



They will give you the medication to end your life.

11. After you die



A doctor will write a Medical Certificate of Cause of Death form after you have died.



This is a form that explains how you have died.

For example, it will say if you died from voluntary assisted dying.



It will also include the illness or medical condition that made you eligible for voluntary assisted dying.



This form is not your **death certificate**.

A death certificate is a legal document that includes information about why a person died.



Your death certificate will not include information about how you died from voluntary assisted dying.

Support for you



There are services you can contact if you need support.



If you need more information about voluntary assisted dying, you can call the NSW Voluntary Assisted Dying Care Navigator Service.

1300 802 133



They are open:

- Monday to Friday
- 8:30 am to 4:30 pm.



You can also send them an email.

NSLHD-VADCareNavigator@health.nsw.gov.au



You can visit our website.

www.health.nsw.gov.au/vad



If you speak a language other than English, you can call the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS).

131 450



When you call TIS, you will ask them to call the NSW Voluntary Assisted Dying Care Navigator Service.

1300 802 133



You can call Lifeline if you need support with your mental health and wellbeing.

13 11 14



Or you can visit their website.

www.lifeline.org.au

Word list

This list explains what the **bold** words in this document mean.

Assessment



An assessment will help your doctor work out:

- how your illness or medical condition affects your life
- if you are eligible for voluntary assisted dying.



Citizen

A citizen is someone who is a member of a country by law.



Death certificate

A death certificate is a legal document that includes information about why a person died.



Eligible

To be eligible, you must meet the rules about who can use voluntary assisted dying.

Interpreter



An interpreter is someone who:

- uses your language
- helps you understand what someone is saying.



Palliative care

Palliative care is support for when you are near the end of your life.



Permanent resident

A permanent resident is someone who is allowed to live in Australia, but they are not a citizen.



Pharmacist

A pharmacist is a person who:

- works at a pharmacy
- gives you medicine.



Prescription

A prescription:

- is a document from your doctor
- tells a pharmacist which medication to give you.



Psychologist

A psychologist helps people with how they think and feel.



Review

When a doctor reviews your decision, they check that you still meet the rules for voluntary assisted dying.



Voluntary assisted dying

Voluntary assisted dying is when a person asks a doctor for help to end their life.



Witness

A witness is someone who knows you, such as a:

- friend
- neighbour
- support worker.



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