

Voluntary assisted dying

Voluntary assisted dying in NSW

This information talks about death and dying. It is for people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities who are looking for information about voluntary assisted dying. Information in your language is available on the [NSW Health website](#) and interpreters are available to help you.

Voluntary assisted dying may be a sensitive topic for some people and their families. You may wish to talk to your loved ones and community to decide if voluntary assisted dying aligns with your values and beliefs and is the right choice for you.

What is voluntary assisted dying?

Voluntary assisted dying means some people can ask a doctor for medical help to die.

It is not for everyone – you need to meet eligibility criteria and not everyone who is eligible will choose it. It is your choice. You take or are given a medication which brings about your death at a time and place you choose.

Only a doctor who is approved and has done special training can give you the medication.

Who can access voluntary assisted dying?

If you want to choose voluntary assisted dying you must:

- Be 18 years of age or older. Children 17 years of age and under are **not** eligible
- Be an Australian citizen or a permanent resident of Australia or have lived in Australia for at least three years in a row
- Have lived in NSW for at least 12 months
- Have a sickness that will cause your death in less than 6 months or in 12 months if you have a neurodegenerative disease (cells in your central nervous system stop working or die)
- Have a sickness that causes you a lot of pain. This pain could be physical, psychological, social or emotional. Your doctor will talk to you to understand your level of pain and explain the options available to help you manage this pain

- Be able to make and communicate your own decisions throughout the whole process
- Want to get voluntary assisted dying. ‘Voluntary’ means it must be your choice.

Having a mental illness or disability alone is not an eligible reason. However, if you meet all the eligibility criteria above, and you have a disability or mental illness (importantly, you must be able to make and communicate your own decisions), you can access voluntary assisted dying.

How do you access voluntary assisted dying?

In NSW, there are legal steps you need to follow. For most steps, you can work your way through the process at your own pace.

Start by asking your doctor about voluntary assisted dying. For most people, this will be a doctor on your treating team who is looking after the healthcare for your sickness.

Only some doctors in NSW can provide voluntary assisted dying. You can contact the **NSW Voluntary Assisted Dying Care Navigator Service on 1300 802 133** if your doctor says they do not do voluntary assisted dying. The Care Navigator Service can help you find a doctor and answer your questions.

You can call the **Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) on 131 450** and ask for the **NSW Voluntary Assisted Dying Care Navigator Service on 1300 802 133** if you need language support.

The role of your family, friends and carers

Some people may choose to make decisions about death and dying of loved ones together as a family.

You may like to have these conversations with your loved ones if you think you want to choose voluntary assisted dying.

This is important if someone usually helps you make decisions about your health or talks to a doctor on your behalf.

Your loved ones can be with you when you talk to your doctor about voluntary assisted dying, but there are some important rules in the law:

- Only you can ask for medical help to die
- No one else can ask for voluntary assisted dying for you
- No one can make you ask for voluntary assisted dying.

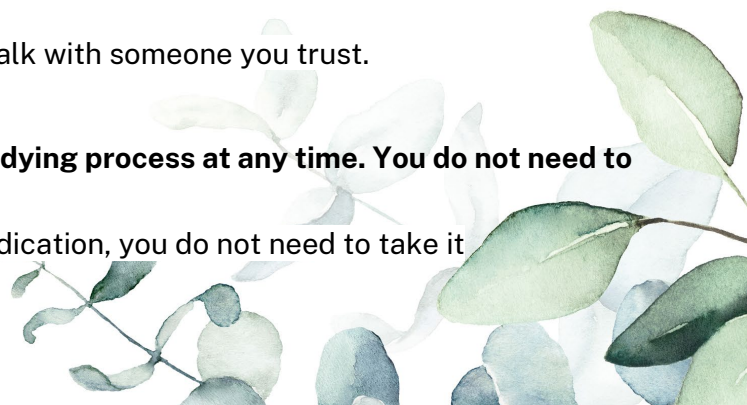
The law says that steps and safeguards need to be followed. This makes sure you are not being pressured by another person to choose voluntary assisted dying. It also makes sure it is your choice.

Some people in your family may find it hard to understand your choice to ask for medical help to die. They may disagree with you. However, they cannot stop you accessing voluntary assisted dying if you want to.

People may have different views. It is important you talk with someone you trust.

Other things to know

- **You can stop or pause the voluntary assisted dying process at any time. You do not need to give a reason**
- Even if you are approved or prescribed the medication, you do not need to take it



- It may take days, weeks or months before you make the final decision to take or be given the medication and this is okay
- You can take the medication at home with your loved ones. Your loved ones can also be with you if you need to take the medication in another place such as a hospital or aged care facility. You cannot take the medication outside of NSW
- Your voluntary assisted dying doctor and/or pharmacist will give you more information about the medication including how it is stored. There are rules in place to keep it safe
- Doctors have an obligation to protect your privacy and right to confidentiality. This includes any discussions you have with your doctor about voluntary assisted dying. Your doctor cannot talk to your family, friends or carers about your decision unless you say they can
- The Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme provides financial assistance towards travel and accommodation costs and is available if you live in regional or remote NSW
- Voluntary assisted dying and suicide are different. Asking for medical help to die is **not** suicide under the law in NSW
- Your death certificate will not list your cause of death as voluntary assisted dying.

End of life care

You and your doctor will work together to discuss your needs, hopes and preferences for your care into the future. This involves knowing what choices you have at the end of your life.

NSW's health care system will care for you whatever choice you make.

If you choose voluntary assisted dying you will still be able to access other care you might need, including palliative care.

Learn more about palliative care: health.nsw.gov.au/palliativecare

The NSW Voluntary Assisted Dying Care Navigator Service

The Care Navigator Service is available to support everyone including patients and families.

It can answer questions about voluntary assisted dying and help you find a doctor if needed. It is available at all steps of the process.

To speak to Care Navigator support staff:

Call: **1300 802 133** Monday to Friday, 8:30am to 4:30pm (excluding public holidays)

Email: NSLHD-VADCareNavigator@health.nsw.gov.au

Information and support about voluntary assisted dying

I need an interpreter to access voluntary assisted dying. What do I do?

You can use an interpreter to start the process to access voluntary assisted dying if you prefer to speak a language other than English.

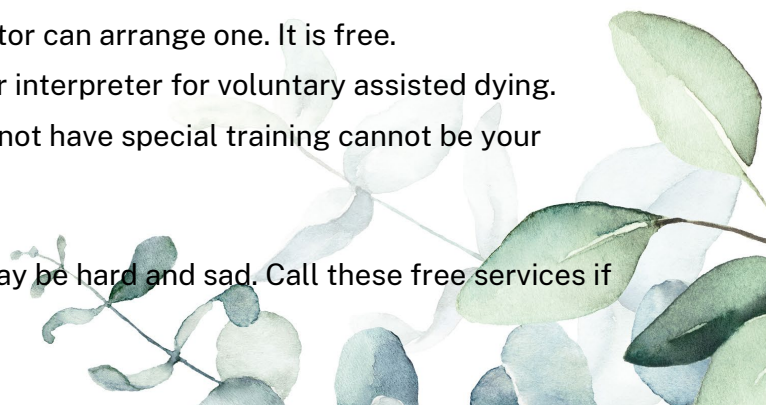
Ask your doctor if you need an interpreter. Your doctor can arrange one. It is free.

Only certain people with special training can be your interpreter for voluntary assisted dying.

A family member, friend, carer or contact who does not have special training cannot be your interpreter. This is because of the law in NSW.

Mental health support

Talking about death and voluntary assisted dying may be hard and sad. Call these free services if



you need support:

- Transcultural Mental Health Line on 1800 648 911 – open Monday to Friday between 9am and 4.30pm. Speak to clinicians who understand your culture and can communicate in your language
- Lifeline on 13 11 14 – open 24 hours for crisis telephone support
- Beyond Blue on 1300 22 4636 – open 24 hours for crisis telephone support
- Mental Health Line on 1800 011 511 – open 24 hours to connect you with NSW Health mental health services
- Triple Zero on 000 if you or someone you are with is in immediate danger.

More information

- Voluntary assisted dying: health.nsw.gov.au/vad
- Palliative care: health.nsw.gov.au/palliativecare
- End of life care planner: nsw.gov.au/planning-for-end-of-life

