

END OF LIFE OPTION ACT (EOLOA)

The End-of-Life Option Act (EOLOA) is a California law that allows some terminally ill adults to request medicine to end their life. The EOLOA process used by patients and their doctors is called “medical aid-in-dying.”

Who can use EOLOA?

People who are 18 years or older, live in California, and:

- Have been diagnosed with a terminal illness
- Have a prognosis of six months or less to live
- Are mentally capable of making their own healthcare decisions
- Can make an informed, voluntary choice
- Can give themselves the medicine

How do I get EOLOA medications?

EOLOA medications are often called “aid-in-dying” medicines. Talk with your referring doctor to learn if these medicines are right for you and if they are willing to prescribe them.

The EOLOA process requires many steps, including a mandatory waiting period, approval from two willing physicians and possibly a mental health evaluation. Your doctor can provide more details.

Participating in the End-of-Life Option Act is optional for both patients and physicians. If needed, we can provide resources about prescribing physicians in your community.

Patients who choose to end their lives and follow the EOLOA law are not legally seen as dying by suicide. Physicians who help patients with this process and follow the law are offering legal end-of-life care.

Common Questions

Do I have to take my aid-in-dying medicines if I have them?

No. Once you have the medicines, you can take them when you want or not at all; it is your choice alone. While others can help prepare the medicines and stay with you, you must physically take them yourself.

Can family members or advance care planning forms request EOLOA?

Only patients can request aid-in-dying support. It cannot be requested in an advance directive, POLST, living will, or other form. It must be verbally requested twice by a patient to their physician in a private setting.

Can my hospice team be there when I take aid-in-dying medicines?

Members of your hospice team may be present, however they cannot help prepare the medicine. Another person in your support community must also be there.

HOW WE SUPPORT YOUR DECISION

Mission Hospice respects patient independence and decision-making. We recognize the right of California citizens to participate in EOLOA and when asked, we provide information and care to adults who pursue this option.

Mission Hospice clinicians never deliver or prepare aid-in-dying medicines.
Ask your team if your hospice physician can prescribe them.

Using aid-in-dying medicines is a personal choice. Your hospice team will support your decisions, and your preferences will help guide us.

You should know that:

- We can help you and your loved ones understand the medicines.
- We can provide resources about EOLOA specialists in your community.
- Insurance typically does not cover the cost of aid-in-dying medicines; you are responsible for this expense.
- We would like to know your decisions about EOLOA and if aid-in-dying medicines are in your home, however sharing this information is not required. We do not share this information with anyone else without your consent.

As long as another person is with you, team members may also be present. If available, they can stay up to two hours when aid-in-dying medicines are taken during business hours (Monday-Friday, 8:30am-5pm).

What to expect:

- Most people die within one to five hours after ingestion. It can be a very sudden or gradual decline and may be different from other dying experiences.
- People who take aid-in-dying medicines often fall into a deep sleep within 10 minutes, followed by coma, slowed breathing, and death.
- If we know your ingestion time, a hospice physician can be available by phone to respond to questions or needs.
- Aid-in-dying prescriptions and processes vary. Your prescribing doctor will help you know how to prepare.
- To comply with the law, you must be aware and able to take the medicines yourself. If not, the hospice team cannot remain in your home.

After taking EOLOA medicines, people commonly have symptoms of dying that don't cause them to suffer but can be startling to watch. These include deep gasping breaths, gurgling sounds and very pale or blue skin.