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| Supporting your family member or friend through the voluntary assisted dying process |
| Information for people considering voluntary assisted dying |

This factsheet provides information about supporting a family member or friend through the voluntary assisted dying process. The information in this factsheet is also available as part of the comprehensive guide [*Voluntary assisted dying – Information for people considering voluntary assisted dying*](https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/hospitals-and-health-services/patient-care/end-of-life-care/voluntary-assisted-dying/community-consumer-information)<https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/hospitals-and-health-services/patient-care/end-of-life-care/voluntary-assisted-dying/community-consumer-information>.

# Summary

This information may help you support a family member or friend who is talking about or has decided to seek voluntary assisted dying.

Key points include:

* You may find discussing end-of-life care and voluntary assisted dying difficult and emotional.
* Your friend or family member has the right to make their own decision about voluntary assisted dying, even if you do not agree.
* You can provide practical and emotional support during the voluntary assisted dying process.
* There are resources to support you while your friend or family member is thinking about or asking for voluntary assisted dying.

# Responding to the person’s decision

For many people, discussions about end-of-life planning and death are difficult and emotional. You may find your family member or friend’s decision to ask for voluntary assisted dying hard to understand. Alternatively, you may not be surprised that they are thinking about voluntary assisted dying, if they have talked about it for some time.

If your family member or friend does decide to ask for voluntary assisted dying, you may find it confronting they are planning their death and how it will happen. You may also feel uncomfortable they are talking about death and dying, as people often prefer not to talk about the end of life. However, you may also be comforted in knowing they can choose the time and place of their death, and that their suffering will soon be over. You may also find you have more time to prepare for and accept their death than you would otherwise. The opportunity to say farewell to your family member or friend while they are still fully aware may help you when you feel all the grief people feel when someone they are close to dies. Knowing these things may make it easier to accept their decision.

# How to support the person

You can provide support by asking your family member or friend how you can help. Ways you can provide practical assistance may include cooking, gardening or driving them to their doctor’s visits. The Better Health Channel has some useful information about [services and support](https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/servicesandsupport/At-the-end-dying-explained) <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/servicesandsupport/At-the-end-dying-explained>.

As a family member or friend, you can ask their doctor for general information about voluntary assisted dying. However, you cannot request voluntary assisted dying for your family member or friend; only they can make this request.

If the person wants you to, you can attend their visits with the doctor during the assessment process, and be part of their discussions about voluntary assisted dying. With their permission, the doctor may ask how you feel about their decision to ask for voluntary assisted dying.

If your family member or friend asks for voluntary assisted dying and plans to self-administer the medication, their doctor may involve you in discussions about a plan for supporting this to happen.

Your family member or friend may ask you to be present when they take the voluntary assisted dying medication. If this is right for you, it is important to consider how being present during death might affect you.

# Getting help

There are resources to support you while your friend or family member is thinking about or going through the voluntary assisted dying process. If you are providing a lot of practical support to the person, you may be getting physically and emotionally tired. Their doctor may be able to provide advice about getting special equipment, medical care or help if you need a break. With the person’s permission, their doctor may also help you to understand how the person’s disease will progress and any treatment, palliative care or end-of-life options.

There are also a range of services that can provide you with emotional support while your family member or friend is thinking about or going through the voluntary assisted dying process. These services include:

* your local doctor
* [Carer Advisory Service](http://www.carersaustralia.com.au/)<http://www.carersaustralia.com.au/> – call 1800 242 636
* [BeyondBlue](https://www.beyondblue.org.au/) <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/> – call 1300 22 4636
* [Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement](https://www.grief.org.au/)<https://www.grief.org.au/> – call 1800 642 066.

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