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| Getting support |
| Information for people considering voluntary assisted dying |

This factsheet provides information about getting support and talking about your end-of-life preferences. 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

If you are thinking about or going through the process of voluntary assisted dying, it is likely you will need some support. Support is available from:

* your doctor and your healthcare team
* carers, family, friends or your support person
* voluntary assisted dying care navigator
* other services.

# Getting support from your doctor and healthcare team

Any willing doctor or other health practitioner (for example, nurse or social worker) can support you while you are thinking about, or in the process of asking for voluntary assisted dying.

Either your doctor or another health practitioner can provide you with information about the process and help you to think through your options. If you want to speak with them about voluntary assisted dying though, you will need to raise it first; a doctor or health practitioner cannot talk about it unless you start the conversation. See [‘How to talk to your doctor about 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/voluntary-assisted-dying-process/how-to-talk-to-your-doctor) <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/hospitals-and-health-services/patient-care/end-of-life-care/voluntary-assisted-dying/community-consumer-information/voluntary-assisted-dying-process/how-to-talk-to-your-doctor> for advice about how to start the discussion.

If you decide to go through the process for voluntary assisted dying, only a doctor can help you with the assessments and the medication.

Not all doctors or other health practitioners agree with voluntary assisted dying. If your doctor or health practitioner does not want to discuss voluntary assisted dying, they may suggest another health practitioner who can help you. If they do not, you can contact a voluntary assisted dying care navigator who will link you with a willing doctor or health practitioner.

# Carers, family members, friends or your support person

Your carers, family, friends or support person may also help you think about or go through the process for voluntary assisted dying (see ‘Talking to your carer, family, friend or support person about your end-of-life preferences and voluntary assisted dying’). If you would like, they can accompany you to your doctors appointments, and be part of your discussions about voluntary assisted dying. They can also be with you if you decide to take the medication.

# Voluntary assisted dying care navigators

Voluntary assisted dying care navigators can help you if you need information or assistance with the voluntary assisted dying process. Many people will be well supported through the voluntary assisted dying process by their coordinating doctor, their healthcare team or the health service they use. However, some people may need extra support during the process. In these cases, voluntary assisted dying care navigators can work closely with the person, their carers, family or friends, doctors, and healthcare team to make sure the person gets the right support.

Voluntary assisted dying care navigators can also help you to find a willing doctor, if your doctor or health practitioner does not agree to talk to you about voluntary assisted dying.

The first two voluntary assisted dying care navigators will be based at Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre while the statewide care navigator service is set up. Voluntary assisted dying care navigators can support you if you have an incurable disease that is advanced, progressive, and will cause your death; not only if you have cancer. You can contact them for support from anywhere in Victoria.

For information or support, email the voluntary assisted dying care navigator at Peter Mac <vadcarenavigator@petermac.org> or call **(03) 8559 5823** or **0436 848 344**.

# Counselling services

Other services that can provide you with emotional and psychological support while you are considering or asking for voluntary assisted dying include:

* **BeyondBlue** – call 1300 22 4636
* **Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement** – call 1800 642 066.

# Talking about your end-of-life preferences

## Talking to your carer, family, friend or support person about your end-of-life preferences and voluntary assisted dying

Talking to people you trust about your preferences for the end of life can be difficult and emotional. Many people do not like to talk about death and dying. However, having an open discussion about your death and how you want it to happen, may help those close to you to understand your end-of-life wishes. They may also feel relieved that the subject has been brought into the open.

There is no right or wrong way to talk about death and dying. Your doctor can support you to have this conversation with those close to you.

## Talking about voluntary assisted dying

You do not need to tell your family and friends that you are thinking about voluntary assisted dying, but you may find it helpful if you do. Discussing the option early with them may help them understand your reasons, even if they do not agree.

If you decide to go ahead and ask for voluntary assisted dying, your doctor will encourage you to discuss the decision with your family and friends. The process can be challenging when you are very sick and you may find it easier if you have support from people you trust. Your family and friends may also appreciate the opportunity to understand your decision and to help you during your final weeks and days.

Every person is different and it is common to have some strained relationships. Even if you have not been in touch with family or friends for some time, the time before death may help people to re-connect. When family members or friends learn what you are dealing with, they may want to re-establish communication and offer support.

If a family member or friend does not support your decision, you may wish to let them know that they do not have to agree with it. If needed, you could consider asking them to respect your wishes. Even if your family or friends do not support your decision, they may still be able to give you the help you need.

Your doctor or another health practitioner can support you to talk about voluntary assisted dying with those close to you. If needed, they may also suggest counselling services to support you and your family and friends through the process.

There is also information about voluntary assisted dying available for your [family and friends](https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/hospitals-and-health-services/patient-care/end-of-life-care/voluntary-assisted-dying/community-consumer-information/information-for-carers-family-friends) <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/hospitals-and-health-services/patient-care/end-of-life-care/voluntary-assisted-dying/community-consumer-information/information-for-carers-family-friends>.

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