



Department of
Health

Information about voluntary assisted dying (VAD)

The coordinating practitioner is responsible for guiding a patient through the VAD process.

Your coordinating practitioner is:

.....

Their contact details are:

.....

Once you've made a request for voluntary assisted dying (VAD)

Pathway 1

or

Pathway 2



The medical practitioner **refuses** your request



Do you still want to access voluntary assisted dying?



No

There is nothing further you need to do

Yes

Approach another medical practitioner yourself and make a new request

Or

Contact the care navigators for help to find a VAD practitioner



The medical practitioner **accepts** your request



They will become your coordinating practitioner and the voluntary assisted dying process begins



Discuss the information in this booklet with your coordinating practitioner



WA VAD Statewide Care Navigator Service

Phone: (08) 9431 2755

Email: VADcarenavigator@health.wa.gov.au

Outcome of the first request

You have received this information booklet¹ because you have made a request to a medical practitioner to access voluntary assisted dying (VAD). This is called a first request. The medical practitioner must decide to accept or refuse your first request.

There are 2 possible pathways your request may take, depending on the medical practitioner's decision. The diagram on the previous page outlines each pathway.

If the medical practitioner accepts your first request, they will become your coordinating practitioner and will coordinate the VAD process for you. You should discuss the information in this booklet with your coordinating practitioner and ask them any questions you have.

If the medical practitioner refuses your first request and you still want to access VAD, there are 2 options:

1. You can approach another medical practitioner and make a new request to access VAD.
or
2. You can contact the WA VAD Statewide Care Navigator Service for assistance to find a medical practitioner who can accept your request to access VAD.

WA VAD Statewide Care Navigator Service

Phone: (08) 9431 2755

Email: VADcarenavigator@health.wa.gov.au

¹ The information provided to you in this booklet is approved by the CEO under section 20(4)(b) of the *Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2019*.

Help with language or communication

If English is not your first language or you have communication difficulties, an interpreter service or communication aid can be used to request VAD and throughout the process. Please speak to your care team to access this service.

What is voluntary assisted dying?

VAD is a legal process that enables a person to access medication that will cause their death. This medication is known as the VAD substance. VAD in Western Australia is regulated under legislation called the *Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2019* (the Act).

Patient eligibility

You can access VAD if you meet all the patient eligibility criteria. This means you must:

- be aged 18 years or older
- be an Australian citizen or permanent resident
- have been ordinarily resident in WA for at least 12 months at the time of making your first request
- have been diagnosed with at least one disease, illness or medical condition that is advanced, progressive and will (on the balance of probabilities) cause your death within 6 months or, for a neurodegenerative condition, within 12 months
- be experiencing suffering due to your disease, illness or medical condition that cannot be relieved in a manner that you consider tolerable
- have decision-making capacity in relation to voluntary assisted dying
- be acting voluntarily and without coercion (that is, without force, influence or persuasion by another person)
- have a request to access voluntary assisted dying that is enduring (it continues over a period of time).

Some of these patient eligibility criteria, such as decision-making capacity and whether your request is enduring and voluntary, will be re-assessed at different stages in the process.

Practitioner eligibility

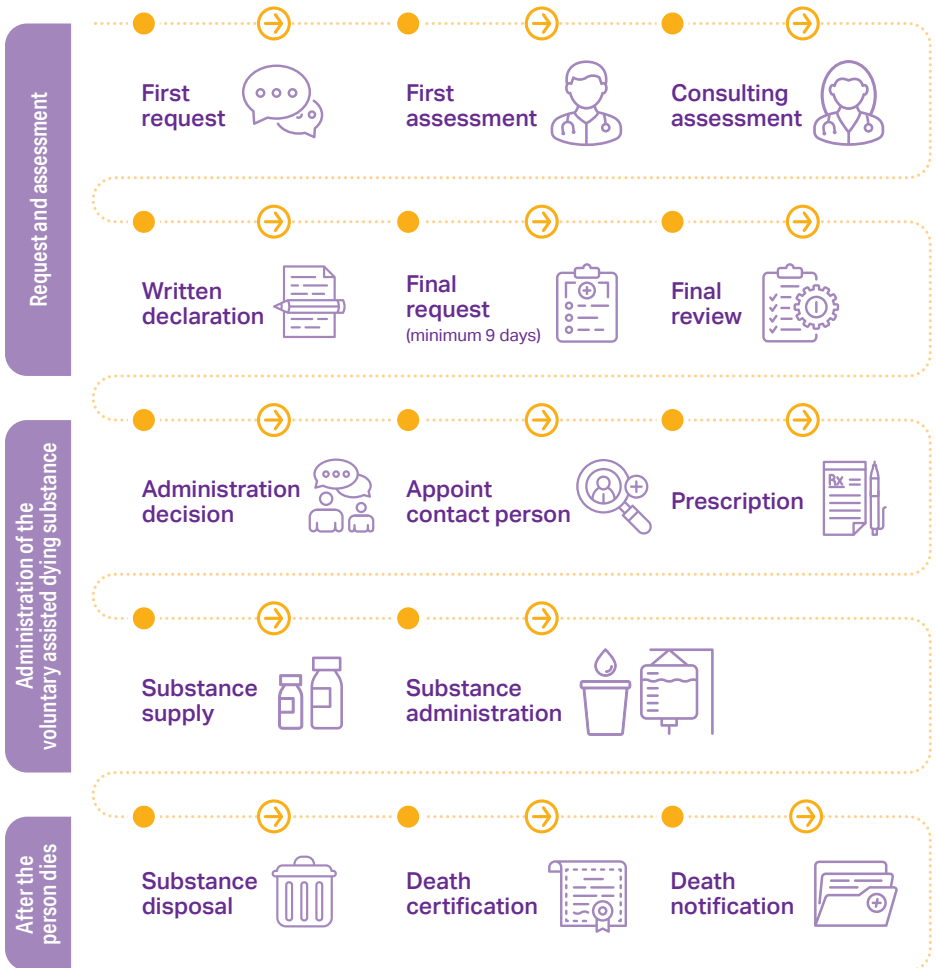
The practitioners involved in the VAD process are qualified to support you. Medical practitioners must meet certain eligibility requirements and must have completed mandatory training before they can be involved in the VAD process. If a nurse practitioner is involved, they must also meet certain eligibility requirements and have completed mandatory training.

Not all medical practitioners or nurse practitioners are eligible to participate in VAD.

The VAD process

The diagram below illustrates key steps in the VAD process. Some of these steps can be done at the same time. There is no time limit by which you must complete any of the steps and you can stop the process at any point before the VAD substance is administered.

Under the Act, the process cannot take fewer than 9 days (unless there are special circumstances). It usually takes several weeks.



Request and assessment

First request

The first request is the request made to a medical practitioner to access VAD. The medical practitioner then decides to accept or refuse the request.

Even if the medical practitioner you asked refused your first request this does not always mean they will stop being involved in your care. It just means they are unable to formally assist in the VAD process.

First assessment

If a medical practitioner accepts your first request, they become your coordinating practitioner. In this role they will coordinate the VAD process for you. The first step for the coordinating practitioner is to formally assess your eligibility to make sure you meet all the criteria required by the Act. This assessment is called the first assessment.

The coordinating practitioner will be involved in some, but not all, of the steps in the VAD process.

Consulting assessment

If the outcome of the first assessment is that you are eligible for VAD, the coordinating practitioner will refer you to another medical practitioner for a second assessment. This medical practitioner becomes your consulting practitioner and will independently assess your eligibility for VAD (based on the eligibility criteria mentioned above). This assessment is called the consulting assessment. You will now have a coordinating practitioner and a consulting practitioner as a part of your care.

Written declaration

If you have been assessed as eligible for VAD by both your coordinating practitioner and your consulting practitioner, you may then make a written declaration in the presence of 2 witnesses, requesting access to VAD.

Final request

If you have made a written declaration, you may then make a final request to the coordinating practitioner for access to VAD. This request can be made in person if practicable, or otherwise via videoconference.

You cannot make a final request until 9 days have passed from the date of your first request. The final request can be made sooner if both the coordinating practitioner and consulting practitioner believe you will die or lose capacity to make a decision about VAD before this 9-day period.

Final review

The final review requires the coordinating practitioner to check the request and assessment process has been completed in accordance with the Act. The coordinating practitioner must make sure you still have decision-making capacity in relation to VAD, are acting voluntarily and without coercion, and still want to access VAD.

Administration of the VAD substance

Administration decision

You will need to decide, with the help of your coordinating practitioner, if you will self-administer the VAD substance (take it yourself) or have an eligible practitioner administer it to you. An administering practitioner is often your coordinating practitioner, or they could be another eligible medical or nurse practitioner.

Appoint a contact person

If you decide to self-administer the VAD substance, you must appoint a contact person before your coordinating practitioner can prescribe the VAD substance. Your coordinating practitioner can help you decide who the most suitable contact person might be. This is important because the contact person has specific tasks that they must carry out under the Act.

The contact person must be 18 years of age, understand what is required of them under the Act, and agree to be the contact person. In particular, the Act sets out what they can and must do in relation to:

- collecting and handling the VAD substance (and returning any unused portion to an authorised disposer)
- notifying the coordinating practitioner when you die (from taking the VAD substance or another cause).

Prescription

The coordinating practitioner will prescribe the VAD substance. They are required to give you certain information about the substance before prescribing it.

Unlike most medicines, the prescription won't be given to you. Instead, the coordinating practitioner will give it directly to the WA VAD Statewide Pharmacy Service (SWPS) as the authorised supplier under the Act.

Substance supply

If you have decided to self-administer, SWPS can supply the VAD substance directly to you, your contact person or to someone else who can collect the substance on your behalf (once the formalities of the prescription process have been completed). Written information about the VAD substance including instructions for storage, use and disposal will be provided by SWPS and given to the person to who is supplied the substance.

If you are going to have the VAD substance administered by a medical or nurse practitioner (the administering practitioner), SWPS will supply the substance directly to them. The administering practitioner will take responsibility for the substance until it is used or disposed of.

Substance administration

You should discuss your intentions for administering the substance with your coordinating or administering practitioner ahead of time. They can help you plan and prepare.

After your death

Substance disposal

Any unused VAD substance that remains after you die (either from administration of the VAD substance or another cause) must be disposed of by an authorised disposer. If you have made a decision to self-administer the VAD substance, your contact person must give the remaining substance to an authorised disposer within 14 days of your death. If you have made a practitioner administration decision, your administering practitioner will dispose of any unused substance.

Death certification

There will be no reference to VAD on your death certificate. This is to respect and protect your privacy. The death certificate will record your underlying illness, disease or medical condition as the cause of your death.

Death notification

The VAD Board will be notified of your death, either by your coordinating or administering practitioner, or by a doctor who completes your death certificate. This notification will happen whether you die from administration of the VAD substance or another cause.

A note on reviewable decisions

If you disagree with the outcome of a decision made by your coordinating or consulting practitioner during the VAD process, you can apply to the State Administrative Tribunal for a review of that decision if it is about the duration of your residency in WA, your decision-making capacity, or whether you are acting voluntarily.

Additional supports

Depending on your situation there are other services that may be helpful to you or your family, friends and carers. More information about VAD can be found on the Department of Health website.

Website: www.health.wa.gov.au/voluntaryassisteddying

WA VAD Statewide Care Navigator Service

The WA VAD Statewide Care Navigator Service is available to provide you with support, information and answers to any questions you might have. The service is nurse-led and staffed by care navigators who are experienced health professionals familiar with the legal and practical aspects of VAD in WA.

The care navigators can:

- provide you with general information about VAD and end-of-life care
- provide you with specific information about the VAD process in WA
- help you to locate a medical or nurse practitioner who is willing and eligible to participate in VAD
- determine if you are eligible to access regional support packages
- link you to other helpful resources.

The WA VAD Statewide Care Navigator Service can be contacted by email and phone during standard business hours (8:30 am – 5:00 pm).

Email: VADcarenavigator@health.wa.gov.au

Phone: (08) 9431 2755

Palliative Care WA

Palliative Care WA can provide information and support with end-of-life planning (including support to create an Advance Health Directive or Enduring Guardianship), palliative care, grief and loss. You can find palliative care service providers by searching their online directory or calling their palliative care information and support line.

Website: www.palliativecarewa.asn.au

Phone: 1800 573 299 (9:00 am – 5:00 pm, 7 days a week)

Beyond Blue

Beyond Blue can provide support for mental health and wellbeing, especially if you are experiencing anxiety or depression.

Website: www.beyondblue.org.au

Phone: 1300 224 636 (any time day or night)

Lifeline

Lifeline can provide crisis support if you need immediate help to deal with emotional distress.

Website: www.lifeline.org.au

Phone: 13 11 14 (any time day or night)

Oversight of VAD in WA

The Voluntary Assisted Dying Board

The VAD Board is a statutory body established to ensure adherence to the Act and to recommend safety and quality improvements. The VAD Board is required to collect information about VAD in WA and is committed to protecting the privacy of all individuals who request VAD.

More information on how your personal information is managed is available on the VAD Board website. Under the Functions of the Board section, you will find fact sheet titled *information for patients about their data*. (www.health.wa.gov.au/voluntaryassisteddyingboard)

Providing feedback on the VAD process

Anyone involved in the VAD process, such as patients, family members or practitioners, may wish to share their personal experiences or provide feedback about the process to the VAD Board. This can be done by completing a *personal reflections form*. This form is available on the VAD Board website under the Functions of the Board section.

www.health.wa.gov.au/voluntaryassisteddyingboard)

You may also ask for the form from the WA VAD Statewide Care Navigator Service, or from your coordinating or consulting practitioner. A personal reflections form is helpful for the board at any stage of the VAD process.

Complaint information

If you are concerned about your experience of the VAD process you should first raise this with the relevant person, service provider or agency which should have a complaints process for you to follow.

You can make a complaint about individuals or organisations that provide health, disability or mental health services to the Health and Disability Services Complaint Office (HaDSCO). More information can be found at www.hadSCO.wa.gov.au.

You can raise concerns about the conduct or performance of a registered health practitioner with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra). More information can be found at www.ahpra.gov.au.

You can raise concerns about a health professional not meeting the requirements of the Act with the VAD Board. More information can be found at www.health.wa.gov.au/voluntaryassisteddyingboard.

This document can be made available
in alternative formats.

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