



# Preparing for your voluntary assisted dying death

Voluntary assisted dying gives you the opportunity to plan for your death and say goodbye to people that are important to you.

This fact sheet provides you with information to consider before you take the voluntary assisted dying medication.

## Saying goodbye

Voluntary assisted dying offers you time to reflect on your life and say goodbye to people close to you. Some ways to say goodbye might be to:

- write letters to your family and friends
- record your life story
- visit a special place
- contact someone you've lost touch with
- hold a celebration or a living wake
- make a video that people can watch after your death.

## Talking about voluntary assisted dying with others

You can choose who you want to tell about your decision to access voluntary assisted dying.

Telling some of your close friends or family means they may be able to support you in your decision to access voluntary assisted dying.

Some people may react contrary or negatively to your decision to access voluntary assisted dying and this may make it difficult to talk to them about your decision.

Conversations about end of life can be difficult for you and people close to you.

If you need support talking to your friends or family about voluntary assisted dying, you can get help from the SA Voluntary Assisted Dying Care Navigator Service or a Voluntary Assisted Dying Local Health Network Liaison Officer.

You can contact the SA Voluntary Assisted Dying Care Navigator Service by calling [0403 087 390](tel:0403087390) between 9.00am to 5.00pm on Monday to Friday.

## Planning for your death

Voluntary assisted dying allows you to choose the time and place of your death.

You should consider:

- when you want to take the medication, for example around a significant date
- where you want to take the medication, for example home, outdoors or at a health facility if you are acutely unwell
- who you want to be present when you take the medication
- any special readings, music or rituals you want to happen when you take the medication.



## When and where you will take the medication

You should choose a safe environment to take the medication where you feel comfortable and can have privacy with your chosen support people present.

Many people will take the medication in their private home.

If you want to take the medication at a hospital, hospice or residential facility you will need to check that the facility is able to support you, including:

- when they are available
- that they have a private space for you
- whether staff will be available to support you.

Some private or non-government health services may not allow voluntary assisted dying to take place at their facility or may have restrictions on whether and how staff can support you. Public hospitals may not have a bed available if it is not required clinically.

You can only take VAD medication that has been prescribed in South Australia within South Australian border.

## Who will be present

You can choose who you want present when you take the medication for example friends, family, health professionals, spiritual or religious advisors, pets.

Having another person present helps make sure that:

- You are well supported
- your body is cared for during and after your death
- the medication kit is safely returned to the SA Voluntary Assisted Dying Pharmacy Service.

Being present for someone's death can be a positive experience but may be confronting for some. You should talk to people you want present about what to expect and decide whether attending the death is right for them.


Consider organising additional support for your family and those present who may become distressed at the time of death. You can get support from the SA Voluntary Assisted Dying Care Navigator Service or a Voluntary Assisted Dying Local Health Network Liaison Officer.

If a doctor is giving you the medication, also known as practitioner administration, they will be present, and they will have arranged for an independent witness to be present at the time of administration.

If you're taking the medication yourself, also known as self-administration, you can choose to take the medication alone. Whilst this is unusual, if it is your choice it is important that you tell someone when and where you plan to take the medication so your body can be cared for.

## Ask a doctor or nurse to attend

A doctor or registered nurse must confirm the person has died before their body can be moved. It is helpful to arrange for this to occur in advance.



Death can be confirmed by any of the below health professionals:

- your usual treating medical practitioner
- your VAD Coordinating Medical Practitioner
- a registered nurse from the Voluntary Assisted Dying Care Navigator Service or the local health network's Voluntary Assisted Dying Liaison Nurse
- a registered nurse from another community health service, for example your treating palliative care team.

Contact the doctor or registered nurse who agreed to attend the person's home after their death.

If a person dies and a doctor or registered nurse is not available to confirm the death, call SA Ambulance Service on 000. SA Ambulance Service may attend with SA Police.

## Getting the voluntary assisted dying medication

You can only get the voluntary assisted dying medication if you have been assessed as eligible by two doctors who are permitted by SA Health to prescribe the medication to you.

Most people will take the voluntary assisted dying medication themselves, also known as self-administration.

If you are not able to swallow or digest the medication a doctor may give the medication to you, for example intravenously (injecting directly into veins), also known as practitioner administration.

Your doctor will give your prescription for the medication to the SA Voluntary Assisted Dying Pharmacy Service. You cannot get the medication from any other pharmacy.

You don't have to fill the prescription if you don't want to.

Some people will never take the medication. Knowing they have the option to control the timing and manner of their death gives them enough comfort.

You can contact the SA Voluntary Assisted Dying Pharmacy Service to return the medication at any time.

### If you are taking the medication yourself – self-administration


If you are taking the medication yourself, also known as self-administration, contact the SA Voluntary Assisted Dying Pharmacy Service to book an appointment for them to deliver the medication to you.

The Pharmacy will visit you to:

- explain how the voluntary assisted dying medication works
- explain how to take the medication
- give you the medication in a locked box.

Keep the medication in a safe place in the locked box until you decide to take it.

Once you have the medication, you can keep it for as long as you want. You don't have to take the medication within a specific timeframe.



You can contact the SA Voluntary Assisted Dying Pharmacy Service by calling [\(08\) 7326 1746](tel:0873261746) between 9.00am to 5.00pm on Monday to Friday.

### If a doctor is giving you the medication – practitioner administration

If a doctor is giving you the medication, also known as practitioner administration, tell your doctor if you decide to take the medication. You will need to negotiate a date and time with your coordinating VAD practitioner. Your doctor will then arrange with the VAD pharmacy to have your prescription filled and dispensed.

### After your death

It can help your family and close friends to have a written plan outlining your choices about what you want to happen to your body and possessions.

You can use the [End of Life Planning Checklist and Worksheet](#) from the Legal Services Commission South Australia to record key information that your family and close friends may need after your death. This could include:

- legal and financial documents
- end of life preferences, for example funeral plans, organ donation
- personal arrangements, for example care of children or pets.

### Will and finances

A will is a legal document that outlines who you want to:

- inherit your possessions and assets
- care for your children, also known as a guardian
- be responsible for administering your estate, also known as an executor.

You don't have to use a lawyer to prepare your will, but doing so reduces the possibility of your will being contested.

If you don't have a legal will, South Australian laws will determine how your property or 'estate' will be divided.

You can get help to prepare a will by contacting:


- [Legal Services Commission](#) on 1300 366 424
- [Law Society of South Australia's](#) Legal Referral Service on (08) 8229 0200
- [Public Trustee](#) on (08) 8226 9200 or at [pt.enquiries@sa.gov.au](mailto:pt.enquiries@sa.gov.au).

### Funeral

A funeral is an opportunity for your friends and family to celebrate your life and offer support to one another.

Consider your funeral arrangements including:

- what you want to happen to your body after your death, for example burial, cremation
- if and how you want your death to be announced to others, for example newspaper notice

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- what type of funeral service you want, for example photos, music, readings
  - your preferred funeral director
  - any spiritual or cultural rituals that are important to you.

There is a cost to hold a funeral service. If you have no next of kin or receive certain payments from Centrelink, [Funeral Assistance SA](#) may provide support to cover the costs of a funeral.

Your support people don't have to tell the funeral director that you accessed voluntary assisted dying.

### Information to give a funeral director

After your death a funeral director will ask your support people for the following information about you:

- Full name
- Date and place of birth
- Sex
- Address
- Date and place of death
- Cause of death
- Parents details, marital history, children
- Known wishes regarding burial or cremation.

The funeral director will register this information with Births, Deaths and Marriages and it will be included on your death certificate.

The cause of death recorded on your death certificate is the disease, illness or medical condition that was the grounds for you to access voluntary assisted dying. Death certificates don't reference voluntary assisted dying.

### Organ donation


Organ donation after voluntary assisted dying is possible in a limited number of cases.

Choosing to help unknown others through organ donation can be a positive aspect of the dying process. However, the potential for organ donation should not influence your decision to access voluntary assisted dying.

Discussions about organ donation should take place with your Coordinating Medical Practitioner once you have been granted a voluntary assisted dying permit.

You may be able to participate in organ donation after voluntary assisted dying if you meet all the below criteria:

- you have a disease, illness, or medical condition that permits organ donation, for example neurodegenerative diseases, primary brain tumours without metastasis, end-stage lung or heart disease
- the voluntary assisted dying medication is administered to you by a doctor, also known as practitioner administration

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- you undertake blood tests and scans that confirm the suitability of at least one organ for transplantation
  - you and your care team have planned a date, time and location for the medication to be administered to you in a designated hospital.

For more information about organ donation after voluntary assisted dying, contact [DonateLife South Australia](#). You should only discuss organ donation after voluntary assisted dying after you have been granted a permit to access voluntary assisted dying.

### **Body donation**

You may choose to donate your body to medical science for use in teaching, training, scientific studies and research.

The University of Adelaide operates a central mortuary facility on behalf of universities in South Australia for the acceptance of all bodies donated to science.

More information about the [Body Donation Program](#) is available online.

## Support

Some people may find issues relating to voluntary assisted dying concerning or distressing.

If you need to talk to someone, these services provide telephone support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week:

- visit the [Lifeline website](#) or call [13 11 14](#).
- visit our [Bereavement Portal](#) website.
- visit the [SA Health mental health services](#) webpage.
- call the Mental Health Triage Service on [13 14 65](#).
- Call the [Kids Helpline](#) on [1800 551 800](#).

## Contact us

For more information about voluntary assisted dying in South Australia visit the [SA Health website](#).

Specialist services are available to support access to and provide information about voluntary assisted dying to people making decisions at end of life, their family, friends and carers, health practitioners and service providers.

### South Australian Voluntary Assisted Dying Care Navigator Service (SAVAD-CNS)

For support to access voluntary assisted dying contact:

**Email:** [Health.VADCareNavigators@sa.gov.au](mailto:Health.VADCareNavigators@sa.gov.au)

**Phone:** [0403 087 390](tel:0403087390)

**Hours:** Monday to Friday, 9.00am to 5.00pm

### South Australian Voluntary Assisted Dying Pharmacy Service (SAVAD-PS)

For queries related to the supply, administration or disposal of voluntary assisted dying medication contact:

**Email:** [Health.VADPharmacy@sa.gov.au](mailto:Health.VADPharmacy@sa.gov.au)

**Phone:** [\(08\) 7326 1746](tel:0873261746)

**Hours:** Monday to Friday, 9.00am to 5.00pm

### South Australian Voluntary Assisted Dying Review Board

For any feedback around voluntary assisted dying contact the Review Board Secretariat at:

**Email:** [Health.VADReviewBoard@sa.gov.au](mailto:Health.VADReviewBoard@sa.gov.au)

**Phone:** [\(08\) 8226 8859](tel:0882268859)

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## For more information

**Health Services Programs Branch**  
**Department for Health and Wellbeing**  
[Health.VoluntaryAssistedDying@sa.gov.au](mailto:Health.VoluntaryAssistedDying@sa.gov.au)  
[www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/vad](http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/vad)

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