

What you need to know about ...

CONTINUOUS PALLIATIVE SEDATION



What is continuous palliative sedation?

If your treatments cease to provide relief and your pain has become unbearable and intolerable, continuous palliative sedation may be an option for you.

Continuous palliative sedation is a form of palliative care (care intended to make incurably ill patients more comfortable). It consists of administering medications while you are unconscious. These medications are administered continuously and you remain asleep until you pass away.

Continuous palliative sedation is available in hospitals, residential care centres, in palliative care facilities and at home.

Who is eligible?

To receive continuous palliative sedation, a person must meet all of the following conditions :

- The person's disease must be incurable, with no hope of recovery.
- The prognosis of survival must be very short, the horizon often being set at less than two weeks.
- The effects of the disease are intolerable for the person and cannot be treated without changing the person's state of consciousness.
- These effects may be physical, psychological, social, emotional or spiritual.

How to access continuous palliative sedation?

Step 1: Ask for information

You can ask for information from a member of your treatment team (nurse, doctor, nursing assistant or any other trusted professional involved in your care). This person will answer your questions and give you information on the possible options.

Step 2: Submit a formal request

If you opt for continuous palliative sedation, you must make an official request using the signed and dated form provided for that purpose. You are required to fill out the request form in the presence of your doctor. It is preferable that your close relations be in agreement with your choice. However, **the decision is ultimately up to you.**

- If you are not able to sign the form, someone else can sign it for you, in your presence. This person :
 - must be 18 years of age or older;
 - must be considered able to fill out the request;
 - must not be a member of your care team.
- If you are incapable of consenting to your care and have not expressed your wishes via an advance medical directive*, a person designated by the Civil Code may give consent in your stead.

Step 3 : Undergo a medical assessment

Your doctor must determine whether or not you meet the criteria of the End-of-Life Care Act.

Your doctor must make sure that your consent is **given freely** and that it is **informed**. Consent is freely given when it is given without any pressure being exerted by a third party (e.g. : friend, family member or member of the care team). Your consent is informed when you (or the person representing you) have been informed of the following :

- the diagnosis of the disease
- the nature and goal of the treatment
- the benefits and risks of the treatment
- other possible care options
- the consequences of your request being rejected

Step 4: Continuous palliative sedation

Before giving you continuous palliative sedation, your doctor will ask you (or the person representing you) one last time to confirm that you still want to receive this form of care. If you again give your consent, the medications will be administered to you. During continuous palliative sedation, the nursing staff will monitor your condition and check for any side effects. Your medication will be adjusted as needed. Furthermore, the nursing staff will continue to give you all of the other care needed to ensure your comfort (wound care, for example).

ADVANCE MEDICAL DIRECTIVES

* Advance medical directives are a means of expressing one's wishes in anticipation of becoming **incapable of consenting to care** as provided for in the [Act respecting End-of-Life Care](#).

Would you like to have more information on the End-of-Life Care Act?

Visit the [Québec.ca/en](https://quebec.ca/en) site and enter «[Act Respecting End-of-Life Care](#)» in the search box.