

End-of-Life Care

St. Joseph's supports individuals making informed decisions about their end-of-life care. This includes talking with family, planning ahead when possible, and deciding when to decline or withdraw treatment (to allow natural death).

Patients and families have been making informed decisions about end-of-life care long before the Supreme Court of Canada decision and medical assistance in dying legislation. Decisions about end-of-life care often require weighing the benefits and burdens of treatment options for the person receiving care. Such decisions take into account the person's expressed wishes, his or her physical and emotional condition such as excessive pain, suffering, expense or other serious inconvenience, as well as the person's culture, religion, personal goals, relationships, values and beliefs.

St. Joseph's is committed to best practices in palliative care, chronic disease management (including chronic pain) and suicide prevention. We have a highly specialized palliative care unit and team at Parkwood Institute. This expert team provides support to many St. Joseph's programs.

Palliative care, as a philosophy of care, is the combination of active and compassionate therapies intended to comfort individuals and their support communities who are facing the reality of impending death.

Contact

Can we help?

Death and dying may involve fears, doubts and questions. In dealing with these emotions, you may benefit from conversations with family, friends or your care team. At St. Joseph's, we have committed and compassionate staff who can help you reflect on your situation and speak to you about your needs. In addition to your immediate care team please feel free to contact our:

Clinical Ethicist
519 646-6100 ext. 42251

Spiritual Care Coordinator
519 646-6100 ext. 64395

Patient Relations Coordinator
519 646-6100 ext. 64727

St. Joseph's Health Care London

End-of-Life Care

**Including information
about medical
assistance in dying**



sjhc.london.on.ca

CARING FOR THE
BODY, MIND & SPIRIT
SINCE 1869

Renowned for compassionate care, St. Joseph's is one of the best academic health care organizations in Canada dedicated to helping people live to their fullest by minimizing the effects of injury, disease and disability through excellence in care, teaching and research.

End-of-Life Care

Caring for the Body, Mind and Spirit

St. Joseph's has a long and strong tradition of providing compassionate care - body, mind and spirit.

Medical advances have brought enormous improvements in the treatment of many conditions and injuries, terminal illnesses, chronic illnesses and the array of complications that come with them. Though advances in care can help people manage illness, death is our common human fate.

How, when, and where we die has changed profoundly in the past 50 years. Because of advanced medical practices individuals can make end-of-life choices regarding life-sustaining care or the decision to end medical strategies.

St. Joseph's is a Roman Catholic health care organization, one of 125 across Canada. As such, we respect life from conception to natural death. We consider life a gift and also know that every life comes to an end. We provide end-of-life care and understand some individuals may want to explore medical assistance in dying (assisted suicide and euthanasia) as one of their options.

As a Catholic institution, medical assistance in dying will not occur at any St. Joseph's location.

While Catholic health care does not include hastening death or intentionally ending life, St. Joseph's excels in end-of-life care.

At St. Joseph's we respond to patients and families with compassion and understanding without judgment. We will listen intently as you discuss your circumstances and your quality of life.

Medical Assistance in Dying

Medical assistance in dying includes assisted suicide and voluntary euthanasia.

- Assisted suicide is when the person swallows a lethal dose provided by the physician or nurse practitioner.
- Euthanasia is when the physician or nurse practitioner administers the lethal dose by injection to the person who has requested it.

The law states that to be eligible for medical assistance in dying, you must:

- be at least 18 years of age
- be capable of making decisions about your health
- have a grievous and irremediable medical condition (see further detail below)
- voluntarily request medical assistance in dying (in particular, not as a result of external pressure)
- give informed consent to receive medical assistance in dying after you were informed of treatments available to relieve your suffering, including palliative care and
- be eligible to receive health services funded by a government in Canada.

The law defines that a grievous and irremediable medical condition includes all of the following:

- a serious and incurable illness, disease or disability
- in an advanced state of irreversible decline in capability
- that illness, disease, disability or state of decline causes you enduring physical or psychological suffering that is intolerable to you and cannot be relieved under conditions that you consider acceptable and
- natural death is reasonably foreseeable, taking into account all of your medical circumstances.

Meeting Your Needs

Medical assistance in dying is not a service offered in Catholic health centres, as its end purpose is to intentionally terminate a life. We support patient choice and will respect the person who is making that choice. This includes informing the person of other options for care and potentially transferring care when the person's needs or wishes are best met at another facility.

If a person wishes to discuss medical assistance in dying, St. Joseph's physicians and staff will support a respectful discussion with compassion and kindness and without judgment. This is a good time to review the goals of care, pain and symptom control as well as spiritual and emotional support. Feel free to speak to a member of your care team to begin the conversation.