



Step-by-Step Instructions for Taking Aid in Dying Medications

Note: If these directions are not followed the process may take longer, or not work.

If you have any questions about these instructions please reach out to your volunteer or the End of Life Washington office at 206-256-1636.

1. 12 hours prior to taking the aid-in-dying medications:
Do not take laxatives or stomach-coating medications like Maalox, Pepto-Bismol, or Carafate (sucralfate).
2. 5 hours prior to taking the medications:
 - Do not eat any food.
 - Drink only water or clear juice (that you can read the newspaper through) during this period; no carbonated beverages, no dairy products. Coffee is okay if it is black or sweetened with sugar only.
3. 1 hour prior to taking the medications:
Take the anti-nausea medications that came with your prescription: 2 mg of Haldol (haloperidol) OR 8 mg of Zofran (ondansetron) AND 20 mg of Reglan (metoclopramide)
4. Mix and Consume the lethal medication
NOTE: Consume these medications while comfortably situated. These medications can cause someone to fall asleep quickly. Just prior to swallowing the lethal medication, mix the medications to make a smooth, non-clumpy solution by using 2oz. of water, OR 2oz. of clear juice
 1. Pour 2 oz water or liquid into the medication bottle.
 2. Recap the bottle securely and shake vigorously for at least 30 seconds.
 3. Pour the liquid medication into a glass and drink immediately
 4. Drink all of the liquid medication within 1-2 minutes. The medicine will taste bitter and may cause a burning sensation. Before and after swallowing the aid-in-dying medication you can suck on sorbet or a popsicle to reduce the chance of burning and help reduce the bitter taste. After finishing the medication you can sip on water, clear juice, or an alcoholic beverage, or have some sorbet or popsicle if desired.
Avoid carbonation and dairy.

NOTE: For those who have a neuromuscular problem and have been taking all meds mixed into soft food such as applesauce, mix the powdered aid-in-dying medication into 1-2 ounces of the soft food you normally use to be able to swallow your medications. Please note that mixing the medication with soft food will likely result in a longer time to death.

Keep the dying person in an upright position for at least 20 minutes, to reduce the risk of regurgitation (even after the person loses consciousness). After 20 minutes they can be lowered to a semi-upright or flat position. Turning the individual onto their right side is optional and may lessen snoring or gurgling. If caregivers are unable to reposition the person for any reason, leave the patient in a seated position.

In most cases loss of consciousness occurs within 3 to 15 minutes. The time to death after taking the medication varies depending on the person. In rare instances, time to death may extend many hours; and even more than a day. Regardless of length, the medication will be effective, and the dying person will remain unconscious throughout. Once the patient has fallen asleep and is unarousable, supplemental oxygen should be turned off.

Write down the following information, which the attending (prescribing) physician will need in order to complete the required paperwork for the Department of Health. Please pass this information on to your Volunteer Client Adviser or the prescribing physician.

Time anti-nausea medications were taken: _____

Time aid-in-dying medicine was taken: _____

Time the person lost consciousness: _____

Presumed time of death: _____

After Death Occurs

There is no hurry to notify anyone or have the body removed. Take as long as you need to observe cultural or spiritual traditions; be together and reminisce, mourn, grieve and celebrate life. When you are ready you can call hospice and the funeral home to notify them about the death. It may be several hours before the funeral home is able to pick up the body.

By law, a Death with Dignity is not suicide. The underlying diagnosis will be listed as the cause of death on the death certificate. Choosing Death with Dignity does not affect life, health or accident insurance policies, nor annuities.

Options for Clients Who Cannot Swallow

Death with Dignity is legal even if a person cannot swallow or can no longer eat. The medication can be self-administered through a feeding tube or rectal tube. Modes of self-administration include: pushing on a syringe into a tube; opening a stopcock or removing a clamp on a gravity fed bag; or turning on a switch for a device set to administer the medicine.

Work with physicians and the care team to determine the most appropriate mode of self-administration. End of Life Washington has additional resources available at <https://endoflifewa.org/medical/> or by reaching out to us at 206.256.1636.

Ingesting through a tube: For people with feeding tubes or rectal tubes, it is generally easy to administer the aid-in-dying medications.

- Pour 3 ounces of water into the bottle of powdered medication, recap, and shake vigorously for 30 seconds. Depending on the method of administration, immediately pour into a previously-flushed gravity feeding bag OR pour into a wide mouth glass or measuring cup and draw the medication into 2 funnel-tipped 60 ml syringes. This may be done by a caregiver or the Volunteer Client Adviser.

When the Client is ready:

- Attach a syringe directly to the feeding or rectal tube: Insert the first syringe into the feeding or rectal tube. Someone can help insert and/or hold the syringe in the tube, but the patient must press the plunger. The patient should empty the syringe in 1-2 minutes, then repeat the process with the second syringe. Once completed, clamp the tube to prevent leakage; flushing is not necessary.
- Gravity-feeding bag apparatus: Alternatively, the aid-in-dying medications can be ingested through the feeding tube using a previously flushed gravity-feeding bag. Empty the just-mixed bottle of medication into the feeding apparatus (bag or open-syringe set-up) while the apparatus tubing to the patient's feeding tube is still clamped. The patient must self-administer the medicine by opening the valve or clamp.