



CONTINUOUS PALLIATIVE SEDATION IN A HEALTHCARE FACILITY

What you need to know

When sleep becomes the only treatment possible... You're wondering about palliative sedation? This sheet provides specific information on this type of care.

What is continuous palliative sedation?

Continuous palliative sedation is a treatment that can be provided to an individual at the end of their life, at their request or at the request of their loved ones, when the doctor estimates life expectancy at less than 2 weeks.

Written consent from the individual (or a loved one if the person is incompetent) is necessary before initiating this care.

Effects

The treatment aims to relieve suffering by inducing deep sleep. Note that suffering can be caused by all kinds of symptoms, both physical (pain, breathlessness, agitation, etc.) and psychological (anxiety, depression, etc.).

How is it administered?

Continuous palliative sedation consists of administering drugs subcutaneously (under the skin) with regular injections, or by constant infusion using a pump that continuously releases the required dose. This medication puts the patient to sleep.

What to expect?

Palliative sedation keeps the patient asleep continuously, until death. It may take several hours to fall into deep sleep and sometimes the dose has to be adjusted.

Monitoring sedation and comfort levels

To ensure the greatest possible comfort and to check the sedation's effectiveness, the nurse regularly assesses the patient's condition. Below are some examples of symptoms that the nurse will monitor:

Symptoms to be monitored	
Desirable	Undesirable
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Little or no reaction when spoken to or touched• Relaxed face• Peaceful rest• Calm breathing• Normal slight movements, as when asleep	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Awakens when spoken to or touched• Restless, pulls blankets, wants to get up• Tense face or grimace• Moaning• Reappearance of main symptom: _____

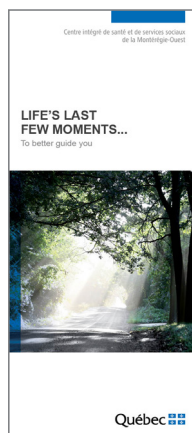


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Do not hesitate to ask
questions of the nurse
or doctor supporting you.

You will find more
answers to your questions
in the brochure
Life's last few moments...



Continuing care

During the period of sedation, essential care for the patient will continue to be given by the various caregivers. Mouth care, mobilization (change of position in bed) and hygiene care (bath in bed, change of incontinence underwear) are maintained for optimal comfort. Occasionally, we may have to use a bladder catheter (urinary catheter) to avoid the discomfort of being unable to urinate naturally.

Accompanying time

This time is important. It enables loved ones to be present at the bedside of the sleeping patient, who is now relieved of suffering.

Although it may seem difficult to find meaning at a time when there is no verbal exchange with the patient, your calm presence can provide supportive accompaniment that is just as important for the person asleep as for their loved ones.

Not to be confused

Continuous palliative sedation is a very different treatment from medical aid in dying. Continuous palliative sedation does not hasten or cause death—death occurs naturally. Sedation allows the body to be calmed, for consciousness to fall asleep and for life itself to decide the time to depart.

Document developed in collaboration with Maison Victor-Gadbois health professionals and Montérégie nurse consultants in palliative care.

Our mission

To maintain, improve, and restore the health and well-being of the Québec population by making accessible an array of integrated and quality health and social services, while contributing to the social and economic development of Québec.

Our vision

Accessible and efficient health care and services that adapt to the needs of Québécois.

Our goals

The CISSS de la Montérégie-Ouest achieves its goals through its innovative approaches and stands apart through:

- its exemplary offer of care and integrated services based on interdisciplinarity, accessibility, and adaptability to the needs of its population;
- its willingness to question and improve its professional, clinical, and administrative practices;
- its appreciation of its personnel and the implementation of human resource management practices;
- its strong relationships with its partners.

Our values

Our actions are guided by five equal and interconnected values: compassion, collaboration, commitment, confidence and consistency.