



## The Swiss self-determination, autonomy and dignity group

DIGNITAS is an association; a help-to-live and right-to-die not-for-profit member's society in line with Swiss law.

Any individual of legal age and full capacity of discernment may sign-up as a member of the DIGNITAS association.



FOUNDED 1988 BY  
LUDWIG MINELLI,  
A HUMAN RIGHTS  
ATTORNEY

A not-for-profit member's society which advocates, educates and supports for improving care and choice in life and at life's end. Our advisory concept of combining palliative care, suicide attempt prevention, advance directives and assisted dying offers a basis for decision-making to shape life until the end.

Swiss laws provide that assistance to suicide is legal as long as it is not motivated by selfish motives.

DIGNITAS advocates, educates and supports for improving care and choice in life and at life's end.

It has provided support for change in the law in Canada, England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland.

In the past 14 years, over 300 Britons have travelled to Dignitas for a professional, medically supported and accompanied suicide. However, these people should not have been forced to travel to Switzerland, but rather have the choice of such self-determined end of suffering and life at home.





1. Consult with an independent Swiss doctor several times

2. Signed witnessed and videos affidavit

3. Repeatedly asked if they wish to continue. If so a lethal overdose is provided and ingested.



In general, Dignitas uses the following protocol to assist suicides: an oral dose of an antiemetic drug, followed approximately half an hour later by a lethal overdose of 15 grams of powdered pentobarbital dissolved in a glass of water. If necessary, the drugs can be ingested via a drinking straw.

The pentobarbital overdose depresses the central nervous system, causing the person to become drowsy and fall asleep within 3–5 minutes of drinking it. Anaesthesia progresses to coma and later, as the person's breathing becomes more shallow, followed by respiratory arrest and death, which occurs within 30–40 minutes of ingesting the pentobarbital.

Exceptionally, in four cases in 2008, Dignitas used breathing helium gas as a suicide method instead of a pentobarbital overdose. The medical supervision was still observed, however, the prescription controlled drugs avoided, which reduced the risk of the medical board / authorities harassing the medical doctor giving a "green light" for the accompanied suicide.

Dignitas had assisted 840 people to die, 60% of them Germans 2008).

By 2010, that number had exceeded a thousand assisted suicides.

Most people contacting Dignitas do not plan to die but need insurance in case their illness becomes intolerable. Of those who receive the so-called "provisional green light", **70% never return to Dignitas.**

21% of people receiving assisted suicide in Dignitas do not have a terminal or progressive illness, but rather "weariness of life".

### **Costs and finances**

Dignitas charges its patients \$5,263 for preparation and suicide assistance, or \$9,210.53 in case of taking over family duties, including funerals, medical costs and official fees.

Dignitas has been known to waive certain costs where there is hardship. Under Swiss Law, Dignitas operates as a non-profit organization, but does not open its finances to the public, which has elicited criticism from some quarters.

In its Right to Die Film Series we have shown  
The following documentaries or docudramas about  
Dignitas:

A Short Stay in Switzerland (Dr. Anne Turner)

The Suicide Tourist (Craig Ewert)

Me Before You (Quadriplegic)

Choosing to Die (Terry Pratchett, Dementia)





## Conductor dies in aided suicide

Sir Edward Downes was appointed CBE in 1986 and knighted in 1991







# The Last Day of Her Life

When Sandy Bem found out she had Alzheimer's, she resolved that before the disease stole her mind, she would kill herself. The question was, when?



May we all live to see  
freedom of choice and  
human dignity in life and at  
life's end around the world

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In Switzerland, voluntary euthanasia is prohibited and a personal ending of suffering by accompanied suicide generally takes place at the own flat/house of the person - the way it should be around the world. Access to assisted dying in Switzerland is not a matter of money, but of paperwork, patience, determination and responsibility, of a competent adult.

**Q:** What is the goal of DIGNITAS?

**A:** To become redundant, to disappear: When DIGNITAS' advisory concept of combining palliative care, suicide attempt prevention, advance directives and assisted dying, and the right to freedom of choice and self-determination in life and at life's end, is implemented in public health care and welfare systems worldwide, no one will need to turn to DIGNITAS anymore.

**Q:** How do I become a member of DIGNITAS?

**A:** Step 1: request to receive our info-brochure and read it carefully. Step 2: fill out, sign and send to DIGNITAS (by airmail, fax or e-mail) the declaration of membership form





**Q:** How long does it take for the preparation of an accompanied suicide?

**A:** On average 3 to 4 months from a first contact until the actual journey to DIGNITAS.

**Q:** Do I need to provide medical evidence (reports by my doctors) ?

**A:** Yes of course. Read our info-brochure carefully, especially the part “prerequisites”.

**Q:** Does DIGNITAS offer euthanasia?

**A:** No. Euthanasia implies putting down someone on his or her request, which is prohibited in Switzerland. However, Swiss law allows for assisted / accompanied suicide



SUPPORT THE  
**RIGHT  
TO  
DIE**  
FOR THE TERMINALLY ILL

AT  
LEAST YOU'RE  
HONEST.

I SUPPORT  
THE RIGHT TO  
NEEDLESSLY  
**SUFFER.**



Dignitas is a Swiss non-profit members' society providing assisted/accompanied suicide to those members of the organisation who suffer from terminal illness and/or severe physical and/or mental illnesses, supported by qualified Swiss doctors. Wikipedia

Members of Dignitas who wish for an assisted suicide have to be of sound judgement, themselves able to do the last act which brings about death, and submit a formal request including a letter explaining their wish to die and most of all medical reports showing diagnosis and treatments tried.

For people with



They have helped over 2,100<sup>[1]</sup> people die at home within Switzerland and at Dignitas' house/flat near Zürich.

Additionally, they do advisory work on palliative care, health care advance directive and suicide attempt prevention and they have been leading and supporting numerous court cases and legislation projects for right-to-die laws around the world.<sup>[2]</sup>

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For people with severe psychiatric illnesses, additionally, an in-depth medical report prepared by a psychiatrist that establishes the patient's condition, is required as to a Swiss Supreme Court decision





" DOES IT CONTAIN NUTS? "