

HEALTH AND SAFETY TIPS

Use Your ER Wisely

The Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA) has a few simple tips to help you avoid unnecessary trips to the hospital emergency room.

In regional and community hospitals, emergency services are available 24 hours a day. In remote hospitals and some community health centres, VIHA also offers 24-hour emergency services, part of which may be on an on-call basis.

The triage system gives priority to emergencies and urgent care requirements. High volumes do result in increased delays for people who do not need urgent care. Triage nurses will try to provide patients with estimated wait times, but even these can change at a moment's notice.

While emergencies are unavoidable, here are a few simple things you can do to avoid unnecessary visits to the hospital.

- If you need non-urgent care, first contact your family doctor or the doctor on call for their clinic or practice.
- **If you are unsure about what services you require, call 811 and you will be connected with HealthLink BC, which provides 24-hour, confidential medically-approved health information and non-emergency services.**
- See your doctor before weekends and/or holidays, if necessary, to avoid long wait-times in the Emergency Department.
- Note the weekend and holiday hours of your local pharmacy/drug store, and ensure your prescriptions are up to date. Make sure you have basic pharmaceuticals on hand to control children's fever and pain.
- Familiarize yourself with the locations and opening hours of area walk-in clinics.
- Get a flu shot - and wash your hands frequently to avoid spreading and contracting viruses and bacteria.
- Take some basic safety precautions: Buckle up, don't drink and drive, don't leave open flames unattended, and keep alcohol and potential poisonous substances out of reach from children.

If you feel that you do require urgent medical attention do not hesitate to come to the Emergency Department or call 911.