

PREFERRED ACCOMMODATION FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

These **Frequently Asked Questions** address common questions patients have about VIHA's accommodation options and the process to request a private and/or semi-private room (Preferred Accommodation).

1. How can I get a private or semi-private room?

Patients' expecting/experiencing overnight stays in hospital can enroll in the Preferred Accommodation (PA) Program and request a private or semi-private room. The enrollment form can be completed at the preadmission clinic or at the admitting desk. Alternatively, you can call the PA clerk for your hospital who can assist you to complete the form and let you know more about the program options, including how you might be eligible for complimentary TV/Phone. Unfortunately, the form is not available on line as it includes carbon copies.

The availability and allocation of private and semi-private rooms is determined by the nursing unit on a daily basis and is dependent on operational needs, hospital room and bed utilization. While we do everything we can to accommodate requests, private rooms may not always be available. For example, when the hospital is extremely busy or when one-bed rooms are needed for operational needs, a private or semi-private room may not be available. In situations where a patient has requested a private or semi-private room that might not be available immediately, we will try to accommodate the patients' request if/when a private or semi-private room comes available.

2. How much does it cost?

A private room is \$195/day; a semi-private room is \$165/day. These are 2010 rates and are subject to change.

3. Who is responsible for the additional cost of a private or semi-private room?

In all cases where the patient has requested and receives a private or semi-private room, the patient accepts responsibility for the daily room charges. If you have requested and receive Preferred Accommodation, you will be billed for the room even if your physician or your condition indicates it is necessary. In addition to BC Medical Services Plan coverage, many patients have extended health benefits with their private

insurance company, i.e. Blue Cross, Sun Life, Great West Life, etc. - please check what type of coverage you may have before coming into the hospital. If you have coverage through your employer or spouse's employer, you already pay a monthly premium for this coverage. Payment is for the **room only**, which comes with complimentary cable television and at most sites local telephone service.

4. Will I be able to reserve a room of my choice?

No, room **reservations** are not available. Private and semi-private room assignments are based on bed-availability and operational necessity. You may enroll in the PA Program and **request** a room type, and VIHA will do everything we can to accommodate your request providing a room becomes available during your stay. In some circumstances, if you initially are put in a Private or Semi-Private room, you may have to move if another patient requires the room for medical or operational requirements. Any room charges would be adjusted accordingly.

5. How do I know what type of room I'm covered for?

In addition to BC Medical Services Plan coverage, many patients have extended health benefits with their private insurance company, i.e. Blue Cross, Sun Life, Great West Life, etc. Most insurance companies cover the cost of either a semi-private or private room. Check with your Extended Health Benefits (i.e. Blue Cross, Sun Life, etc.) insurance provider prior to your hospital visit to find out what type of room your plan covers and if there are any limits. The hospital or the Vancouver Island Health Authority is not involved in extended health plans or coverage.

6. Why does VIHA ask patients for their extended health information (on the PA form)?

The BC Medical Services Plan pays for basic ward coverage. Many of our patients have extended health benefits through deductions at work. By getting information about your extended health coverage, we may be able direct bill the extended health benefits company. Whenever possible, we will direct bill your Extended Health Care Plan; however some plans require that we bill the patient directly. Please note: Pacific Blue Cross does not permit direct billing by VIHA.

7. Is this going to use up my insurance coverage?

In general, most extended health benefit plans are employer-sponsored and do not have pre-determined limits on room charges. Please check with your Extended Health Care provider to determine your level of coverage.

8. Last time I was in the hospital I had a private room for free. Why do I have to pay now?

All health authorities in BC, including VIHA, have always charged for private and/or semi-private accommodation. On previous admissions you may not have been asked your preference, or you may have been placed in a private or semi-private room without charge for operational reasons. Please note, if you request and receive a private or semi-private room and later it is determined that your condition requires this accommodation you **will** still be billed for the room.

9. Why do you charge extra for private rooms and what do you do with the money?

In Canada, there is no charge for medically necessary care. The standard of care (where there is no room charge applied) is for shared inpatient accommodation a room with 3 or more patients. Private or semi-private accommodation may be available, and where it is available, an additional charge to the patient is applied. Revenues generated from this assist the health authority support ongoing operations, including patient care, capital projects, training and education. Some units in VIHA hospitals do not offer ward or semi-private beds and you may be in a non-billable private or semi-private room.

10. Are all patients billed when they stay in hospital?

Only patients who have specifically enrolled in the PA program and requested a private or semi-private room are charged. As per Canadian law, patients do not pay for medically necessary care, or for standard accommodation rooms with three or more patients that is required as part of that care. Patients without medical coverage (for example, foreign patients) are charged under a different fee structure.

11. Can I ask for accommodation options if I don't have Extended Health Benefits?

Yes. You can enroll in the program and complete the Private and Semi-Private Room Request and Responsibility Form either at the time of Preadmission/Admission or at any

time throughout your stay. Room charges will be directly billed to your credit card and you will receive complimentary value-added features (TV and local phone service, where available).

12. Can I change my room request?

Yes. If you wish to change your room request please ask your nurse to assist you. The chart copy of the Private or Semi-Private Room Request and Responsibility Form has a section for changes that can be completed and faxed to the appropriate admitting department. If you have requested a ward and wish to change that to private or semi-private you or your nurse can contact the Preferred Accommodation Clerk for your hospital and they will process your request. Alternatively, the nurse can call the admitting desk for assistance. Your extended health plan information and credit card information will be needed.

Please note: VIHA will make every effort to facilitate your change request and will move you as soon as your requested room type becomes available; however, until you are moved, you will continue to be billed for the private or semi-private room you are occupying.

13. What if I don't agree with my bill?

If for some reason you believe you were improperly billed, you can contact Finance at 250-370-8205. They will direct your query to the correct area for reconsideration.

Should it be determined that you were improperly billed, you will be asked to return the receipt you received when your credit card was billed to Finance. Once the receipt has been received by Finance your credit card will be credited with the agreed upon amount.

14. I don't want a private or semi-private room. Can I still rent a TV and/or telephone?

Yes. If you have been in a Preferred Accommodation room and are moved you can request television and telephone directly from The Hospitality Network. Most hospital sites offer cable television and some hospitals also offer local telephone service. These services can be obtained from The Hospitality Network representative for a daily rental charge. You can fill out an application form available on most Acute Care nursing units,

or talk to the Hospitality Network representative who make daily rounds at most sites. You will need to pay for these services yourself.

15. If I enroll in the program and don't get into a semi-private or private room, do I still get Free TV and Telephone?

Your Extended Health Provider will only offer the complimentary TV and phone service if you are in a Semi-private or Private room. If you are in a regular ward-room, you can order a TV and phone, but you will have to pay for it yourself.

16. I have a complaint or compliment (other than finance –see #13 above for finance questions), who do I talk to?

The Vancouver Island Health Authority is committed to providing exemplary health care and service to our clients (this term includes patients, residents, and their family members). Each and every interaction becomes our opportunity to create positive experiences for you. Every day, we endeavor to choose behaviours to promote and maintain a culture of caring and compassion. Please contact the Patient Care Quality Office (PCQO) to express feedback regarding your experience of care or service, both compliments and complaints. We can be reached at:

patientcarequalityoffice@viha.ca

Local: 250-370-8323

Toll-Free: 1-877-977-5797