

Preferred Accommodation – Frequently Asked Questions

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What is the Preferred Accommodation Program?

The Preferred Accommodation program provides patients the opportunity to purchase access to private or semi-private rooms (where these rooms are not the insured standard), including extra services such as television and telephone.

When private or semi-private rooms are available and those rooms are not the insured standard, patients may sign-up for the Preferred Accommodation Program and request such a room.

What does “insured standard” mean?

Insured standard refers to the type of room that is covered by BC Medical Services Plan. If a hospital has rooms that accommodate three or more patients and that type of room is appropriate for the patient, then that is the insured standard. For hospital units which only have private rooms, those rooms are the insured standard. For units with a mix of private and semi-private (2-bed) rooms, semi-private rooms are the insured standard. Patients will not be billed for rooms which are the insured standard.

If your attending medical practitioner determines that you require a private or semi-private room, and these rooms are not the insured standard, you will not be billed for the room.

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

Patients can request a private or semi-private room through the Preferred Accommodation (PA) Program if those rooms are not the insured standard. The enrollment form can be completed at the preadmission clinic or at the admitting desk. You can also call your hospital’s PA clerk. They can let you know about the program options (including eligibility for complimentary TV/phone) and help you complete the form. Unfortunately, the form is not available online.

The availability and allocation of private and semi-private rooms is determined by the nursing unit on a daily basis, depending on operational needs and availability. While we try to accommodate requests, private rooms may not always be available. In situations where a patient has requested a private or semi-private room and one is not available immediately, we will try to accommodate the patient’s request if/when a private or semi-private room becomes available.

How much does it cost?

The charge for a private room is currently \$195/day; a semi-private room is \$165/day. These rates are subject to change.

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

When a patient requests and receives a private or semi-private room, (and these rooms are not the insured standard) the patient accepts responsibility for the daily room charges. In addition to BC Medical Services Plan coverage, many patients have extended health benefits with their private insurance company, such as Blue Cross, Sun Life, or Great West Life; 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 and a food/beverage coupon.

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 sign up for the PA Program and request a room type, and Island Health will try to accommodate your request. In some circumstances, if you initially are placed 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.

Why does Island Health ask patients for their extended health information (on the PA form)?

Many of our patients have extended health benefits. By getting information about your extended health coverage, we may be able to direct bill the extended health benefits company for charges incurred.

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.

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

On previous admissions you may have been placed in a private or semi-private room without charge for operational reasons, for medical reasons, or because the room was the insured standard. If you request and receive a private or semi-private room and later it is determined that your medical condition requires this accommodation you will not be billed for the room.

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

Private or semi-private accommodation may be available even where it is not the insured standard, and in these cases where it is available and requested, there is an additional charge. Revenue generated from this program assists the health authority to support ongoing operations, including patient care, capital projects, training and education.

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. Residents of Canada do not pay for medically necessary hospital care or for accommodation in a room which is the insured standard. Patients without medical coverage (for example, patients who live outside Canada) are charged under a different fee structure.

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, food/beverage coupon where available).

Can I change my room request?

Yes. If you wish to change your room request please ask your nurse to assist you. If you have requested a room that is the insured standard and then wish to change to private or semi-private room, 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: Island Health will make every effort to facilitate your change request and will move you as soon as your requested room type becomes available; once you have requested to be moved to standard accommodation, you will no longer be billed for the private or semi-private room you are occupying (if that room is not the insured standard).

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 send your query to the correct area for review. If you were improperly billed, you will be asked to send the receipt you received when your credit card was billed to the Finance department and once they receive the receipt, your credit card will be credited with the agreed upon amount.

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 hospital nursing units, or talk to a *Hospitality Network* representative; these representatives make daily rounds at most sites. You will need to pay for these services yourself.

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 as part of the Preferred Accommodation room package. If you are in a regular ward-room, you can order a TV and phone, but you will have to pay for it yourself.

If I have a complaint or compliment (other than those related to billing), who do I talk to?

Island Health 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.

If you require further information, please contact: patientcarequalityoffice@viha.ca
Local: 250-370-8323 Toll-Free: 1-877-977-5797 www.viha.ca/visit