

What you need to know about fees for patient transportation

The following describes fees that you, as a patient, may need to pay in the event that you are transported by ambulance¹ to a hospital, transferred between hospitals, or when you are discharged from hospital. It also provides information on some of the travel assistance programs available to you if you need to travel for medical care outside of your community.

WITH B.C. Medical Services Plan (MSP) coverage:

Ambulance trips to hospital (911 calls)

When you call 911 (or someone calls for you) to ask for an ambulance to take you to a hospital:

- If you are taken to an acute care hospital (by ground or air ambulance), you will receive a bill for \$80 from the BC Ambulance Service.
- If you decline the ambulance service, you will receive a bill for \$50.
- If you receive Income Assistance or MSP Premium Assistance, you will not be charged.
- The information above does not apply to calls that are part of current or future WorkSafeBC claims.

Hospital to hospital trips

If you must be transferred from your present hospital to another hospital:

- There is no charge for medically necessary transfers between acute care hospitals. (Note: You will need to make your own travel arrangements to get back home when you leave the hospital, even if you are a long way from home.)

When you leave the hospital

You are responsible for your own transportation home (private residence, residential care facility, etc.) when you leave the hospital. Your costs will depend on how much medical supervision you need.

- If you require medical care, you will need to travel by ground or air ambulance (as appropriate) and will be charged \$80 (fee waived if on Income Assistance or MSP Premium Assistance).
- If you do not require medical care but are not well enough to travel on private or commercial transport (e.g., bus, plane), then the hospital may recommend that you use a contracted local patient transfer service (SN Transport, etc.). You will be charged \$50 (fee waived if on Income Assistance or MSP Premium Assistance).
- If you are well enough to travel by private or commercial transport (e.g., bus, plane), you are responsible for organizing and paying for your journey home, even if you are a long way from home. For example, if you have been transferred by air ambulance to a Vancouver hospital for cardiac surgery, and you are discharged from there, it is your responsibility to organize and pay for your trip home. Some health authorities have travel assistance programs in place for those who require them. For information, please see the section on travel assistance for patients travelling to access medical care outside their home community, as some programs are also available to discharged inpatients returning home, or contact a nurse or social worker in the hospital.
- In the unfortunate circumstance that a family member passes away while in hospital, the family is responsible for organizing and paying to have the deceased returned home. The social worker on the unit can help support the family at this time.

¹ For the purposes of this brochure, the term “ambulance” refers to the BC Ambulance Service.

WITHOUT MSP coverage:

All transfers (e.g., to or from a hospital, between hospitals) will be charged to you if you do not have coverage under MSP.

- If you require medical care along the way and need an ambulance to transport you, you will receive a bill for each section of your transfer based on the type of transport:
 - Ground: \$530 flat rate for each part of the transfer
 - Air ambulance (airplane): \$7 per statute mile
 - Air ambulance (helicopter): \$2,746 per hour
- If you do not require medical care during an inter-hospital transfer, the hospital may elect to use a contracted local patient transfer service (SN Transport, etc.). You will be charged \$50.
- If you are well enough to travel by private or commercial transport (e.g., bus, plane) when you leave hospital, it is your responsibility to arrange and pay for your trip, even if you are a long way from home.
- In the unfortunate circumstance that a family member passes away while in hospital, the family is responsible for organizing and paying to have the deceased returned home. The social worker on the unit can help support the family at this time.

Payment information (including federal programs and private coverage)

- Federal programs (e.g., Veteran Affairs Canada, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada) may cover some of these fees for their clients. You are responsible for checking for possible coverage and reimbursements.
- If you receive a bill and believe you should not be charged due to being a recipient of Income Assistance or MSP Premium Assistance, please contact the BC Ambulance Service (if ambulance fee) or the health authority (if the bill was sent by the health authority).
- Some private plans may assist with the costs of patient transportation (e.g., ICBC, WorkSafeBC, private insurer such as Pacific Blue Cross). Please check with your insurer.
- Some health authorities have hardship policies for supporting patients and their families with these fees. Please contact the Patient Care Quality Office in the health region from where you were discharged (contact information below) to request more information.
- Some health authorities also have travel assistance programs in place for those who require them. For more information, please see the section on travel assistance for patients travelling to access medical care outside their home community, as some programs are also available to discharged inpatients returning home, or contact a nurse or social worker in the hospital.
- When you are charged fees, you will receive a bill in the mail from the BC Ambulance Service or from the health authority from where you were transferred.

Clothing & personal items

- Please make sure you have all your personal items (e.g., clothing, identification, house keys, cash, credit or debit cards) with you when you leave the hospital. If you do not have access to your belongings, please ask your nurse if a social worker is available to assist you.

Contact information

- BC Ambulance Service: 1 800 665-7199 or www.bcas.ca/EN/main/about/fees.html
- BC Medical Services Plan: 1 800 663-7100 or www.health.gov.bc.ca/msp/
- Patient Care Quality Office: www.patientcarequalityreviewboard.ca/makecomplaint.html
 - Fraser Health Authority: 1-877-880-8823 or pcqoffice@fraserhealth.ca
 - Providence Health Care: 1-877-993-9199 or pcqo@vch.ca
 - Provincial Health Services Authority: 1-888-875-3256 or www.phsa.ca/PatientCareOffice
 - Vancouver Coastal Health: 1-877-993-9199 or pcqo@vch.ca

Travel assistance for patients travelling to access medical care outside their home community

If you have a planned hospital appointment for a service not available in your community (e.g., visiting a specialist, obtaining specialized diagnostic testing), it is your responsibility to arrange and pay for your trip to and from your appointment. There are some B.C. Ministry of Health and health authority programs that may help you with some of the travel and accommodation costs.

For example:

Travel Assistance Program (TAP): This program helps eligible B.C. residents with travel costs for non-emergency care. Through TAP, the ministry partners with BC Ferries and other carriers to provide individuals covered by MSP with transportation discounts when they must travel to access health services. Generally, TAP only supports access to specialty services. However, exceptional situations may arise when primary health care services are not available locally. TAP does not provide direct financial assistance to patients for travel costs.

Health Connections Program: Four of the six health authorities (Northern Health, Interior Health, Vancouver Coastal Health and Vancouver Island Health Authority) offer the Health Connections program to assist patients with transportation options. The program varies across the health authorities, and includes regular bus services, as well as discounted travel and accommodation. The program is only available for physician-referred services. Services must be provided in B.C. to qualify for support, with the exception of residents from northeastern and southeastern British Columbia.

BC Family Residence Program: This program provides subsidized accommodation for families when their child requires medical care at BC Children's Hospital or BC Women's Hospital Neonatal program. Travel assistance is also provided through enhanced ground transportation for children through the Shriners Care Cruiser program and expanded air transportation through Hope Air – a national charity that arranges free flights for patients of all ages who cannot afford to fly to receive the medical care they require.

Contact information

- Travel Assistance program: 811 or www.health.gov.bc.ca/tapbc/tap_patient.html
- Health Connections program: 811 or www.health.gov.bc.ca/tapbc/connections.html
- BC Family Residence program: 811 or www.bcfamilyresidence.gov.bc.ca