

The Leukemia/Bone Marrow Transplant Inpatient Unit

A Guide for You and Your Family

Read this guide to learn:

- What to expect while staying in hospital
- Daily routine of the unit
- Food and meals on the unit
- Visitor guidelines
- Tips from former patients and the health care team
- What to bring to hospital (and what not to bring)



The Inpatient Leukemia/Blood and Marrow Transplant Unit

For most people, leaving the comfort of their home and being admitted to hospital can be a stressful experience. We would like to take as much anxiety out of the situation as possible by providing you with information about the Leukemia/BMT Inpatient Unit so you can know what to expect prior to your admission.

We provide 24-hour nursing and physician care with close monitoring and continuous assessment of your health care needs.

Where is the unit located?

The Leukemia/BMT Inpatient Unit is located on the 15th floor and half of the 14th floor of the Jim Pattison Pavilion. You may hear these units referred to as T15A, T15B and T14L. Jim Pattison Pavilion can be accessed from the main hospital entrance on West 12th Avenue. There is an elevator to the 15th floor in the Jim Pattison Pavilion.

The 15th floor has a total of 26 beds, with 12 private rooms and 7 semi-private rooms containing two beds each. The 14th floor expansion has 9 beds, with 5 private rooms and 2 semi-private rooms.

My immune system is low; will I need to be in isolation?

The 15th floor unit is equipped with a special HEPA-filtered positive pressure air filtration system, which protects patients by minimizing their exposure to organisms, while allowing them to move freely about the unit. The whole unit is considered to be an isolation unit.

The 14th floor unit does not have this HEPA-filtered air filtration system. Patients on this unit are safe but must keep their doors closed and wear a face mask whenever leaving their room. Patients of 14L are free (and encouraged) to walk around the 15th floor without a face mask

Admission to the Inpatient Unit

Will I be admitted on the admission date I was given?

Patients admitted to the Inpatient Unit are generally acutely ill, requiring high dose chemotherapy, or undergoing a stem cell transplant. These patients can be newly diagnosed, returning for further chemotherapy treatment or returning due to complications from previous treatment.

Our program maintains a computerized wait-list for patients requiring admission to hospital for treatment. This wait-list includes an “ideal date” for each patient’s admission to hospital. Please note:

- In some cases, patients who have been given an “ideal admission date” cannot be admitted to hospital due to the lack of an available bed.
- Some patients must be admitted on their planned admission date due to carefully coordinated treatments that cannot be adjusted.
- Priority for admission is always given to patients who are acutely ill and require urgent or emergent care as an inpatient.

Rest assured that our team prioritizes prospective admissions every day. We will make every effort to admit you as close to your ideal admission date as possible.

What should I have ready while I’m waiting to be admitted?

From your ideal admission date onwards, have your hospital bag packed and be ready to come to the hospital as soon as you are contacted by our unit charge nurse.

Due the unpredictability of our unit, we are only able to hold your bed for a limited amount of time. For this reason, it is very important that you come to the hospital right away when you are contacted by our nurse. You will rarely be called to be admitted after 3pm.

Thank you for your patience and understanding with this process, we understand how stressful waiting for admission can be.

Inpatient Unit Rooms

What is provided in each room?

Each room on the 14th and 15th floor has:

- A telephone (with free incoming calls. A daily rate is charged for outgoing calls.)
- Cable TV (free of charge)
- A small cupboard and closet for your personal belongings.
- Wi-Fi access:
 - For basic free access, look for the username “healthguest”. Signs are posted on the unit for the access password.
 - For videos and streaming, premium Wi-Fi is available for a cost **per device**. Opening your browser on the unit will provide instructions.
 - Most patients suggest the premium Wi-Fi access.
- Private rooms have their own bathrooms with showers.
- Semi-private rooms have full bathrooms shared by 2 patients. Patients assigned to semi-private rooms may use the common shower on the 15th floor.

Will I stay in the same room?

You may be asked to move to a new room or unit at any time during your stay. It is possible you may be moved multiple times while you’re in hospital. We try to avoid this as much as possible but private rooms are needed for patients who are severely ill or require increased infection control precautions.

As you get better and are waiting for discharge, you may be moved to a different unit in the hospital to accommodate others waiting to be admitted to our unit. You will still be seen by our doctors every day if this is the case.

What is protective isolation?

Occasionally, patients will develop respiratory symptoms, or other more contagious infections. For the safety of all our patients, they will be placed on special isolation precautions until the cause of the symptoms is determined. Staff and visitors will be required to wear masks and gloves, and in some circumstances gowns and goggles. The isolation procedures will be posted outside the patient’s room. All visitors are asked to follow the isolation requirements.

Daily Routine

Your routine may be different from day to day. Some events that will be routine include:

- **Morning blood work:** Your nurse will draw blood from your IV line every morning between 5:30am and 6:30am. If you don't have an IV line, your blood will be drawn from your arm veins. Blood results are used to monitor your daily progress.
- **Nursing Support:** Your nurse will perform ongoing assessments of your condition and symptoms early in the morning, in the evening, and throughout the day. Nurses work 12 hour shifts (from 7 to 7), and are your main contact through treatment.
- **Doctor Rounds** Each day a doctor will assess your condition, or more often as needed. Doctor rounds are a good time to ask questions you've written down. You'll see many different doctors while in hospital. All doctors are in contact with each other regarding your care. Together, they have decided the best treatment for you.
- **Allied Health Staff Visits** Other members of the health care team may also see you during the day. They include the occupational therapist, pharmacist, dietitian, physiotherapist, social worker, or doctors from other areas that have been asked to see you. Most of these meetings will occur on a drop-in basis.
- **Treatment, Procedures, Activities, Visitors & Self Care** Each day, time will be made for personal hygiene, mouth care, IV line care, medications, diagnostic tests and procedures, treatments, meals and exercise. Another important part of your daily routine will be visits and phone calls from family and friends.
- **Staying Active** Try to stay out of bed as much as possible, even when you're feeling unwell. Sit up for meals and walk around the unit as much as you can each day. There is an exercise bike available for your use and a physiotherapy team that will help you design an activity program based on your goals and needs.
- **Downtime** With such a busy schedule, it is necessary to find a balance that allows for "downtime." Have some time to yourself. Each of us needs some form of quiet time for recreational activities, relaxation and rest.

Food and Meals on the Inpatient Unit

We understand how challenging it can be to eat while you're feeling unwell and in hospital. For infection control reasons, there is no longer a fridge or microwave available for patient use (poor handwashing led to our kitchen being a source of infection).

- Your meals will be served to you in your room by dietary staff. Breakfast comes between 9:00 am and 9:30 am. Lunch arrives between 1:00 pm and 1:30 pm. Dinner is served between 6:00 pm and 6:30 pm. Meal times can be later on T14.
- You will receive a daily menu or an attendant will come to your bedside to mark your choices for the following day's meals.
- Dietitians will see you while you are in hospital. They will assess how well you can eat, what you can eat, and help you to choose foods to meet your needs.
- A small cooler can be kept at the bedside; they must be taken home to be cleaned daily. No electric coolers please, they have fans that blow will blow dust.
- Volunteers can pick up food and supplies for you, using your own money. Availability can be limited, please ask your nurse.

Tips from our dietitians and former patients to help you eat while feeling unwell:

- Ask your nurse or dietitian about alternate menu options, early trays and snack deliveries. You can order double portions on any item or meal.
- Do not eat refrigerated food left sitting longer than 2 hours. It can make you sick.
- If you don't like the menu choices offered, ask what alternatives are available.
- If you enjoy a certain meal, ask for 2 portions. Ask for both options for dessert.
- Popsicles can be stored in the freezer with your name on them. Give boxes of popsicles to the nurse; items entering a room cannot be returned to the freezer.
- There is a microwave and ice available in the cafeteria on the 3rd floor.
- Dietitians can help you find what works for your appetite. Be open with them.
- Order take-out from restaurants. Download food delivery apps to make ordering online easier (i.e. DoorDash[®], Skip the Dishes[®]). To find a reputable restaurant, click "VCH Inspection Reports website" at: www.vch.ca/public-health/environmental-health-inspections/restaurant-food-safety

Visitor Guidelines

With your permission, family and friends are welcome to visit any time. If you do not want visitors or phone calls, let the nurse know. Discuss the topic of visits and phone calls with family and friends so that they know what your wishes are. It is important to have planned rest periods.

To protect the safety and rights of all our patients and to keep our unit running smoothly, we appreciate your cooperation in following these guidelines:

- **Check in.** All visitors are asked to check in before entering the unit. There is a wall-mounted telephone with the number to call, located by the sink, just before the unit doors.
- **Wash your hands.** All staff and visitors **MUST** wash their hands:
 - Before entering the unit
 - Before entering a patient's room
 - After leaving a patient's room
- **Plants and flowers are not allowed** in the unit as they carry a large number of bacteria and fungal spores in their water and soil. This also includes dried flowers, dried grasses, and moss. Artificial flowers and balloons are welcome.
- **Children** are welcome on the unit. Please be mindful of other patients trying to rest and how smaller children may easily become restless. Children who have recently received "live" vaccinations may be risky for the patient. For more information, ask your nurse or see the *"Supporting You through Treatment"* guide.
- **No visitors with cold/flu symptoms** of any kind, unidentified skin rashes, shingles, etc. are permitted on the unit. Please stay at home until you are feeling better.

Please see next page for more visitor guidelines.

- **No more than 3 visitors** are permitted in the room at a time. The HEPA-filter air system works best with fewer people in the room. The rooms are small and crowd easily. Noise level also rises easily. Please use the patient lounge or ask your nurse about booking the larger “education room” if you are expecting more visitors at once.
- **Visitors must use public washrooms.** There is one located near the sinks and elevators on each unit. The patient’s washroom is for patient use only.
- **1 overnight visitor** may stay as long as beds are folded away by 8am. Unless patients are acutely unwell, we strongly suggest loved ones do not stay overnight. It is important that caregivers have “downtime,” allowing them to properly shower, rest and look after themselves. Having a daily break from the hospital environment is an important way to prevent caregiver burnout. Caregivers will be assisting their loved ones after discharge and need to have the energy to take on this role. Check in with your night nurse if you are staying overnight.
- **Intimacy.** You can hug and kiss your family. Loved ones can lie in your bed with you but they must get up when your nurse requests. This is the nurses’ discretion. Nurses need safe and immediate access to patients if they become medically unstable. Please be respectful to your roommates.
- **Scent-free.** Vancouver General Hospital is a scent-free environment. Visitors and patients are asked to avoid strong perfumes and colognes, as many of the patients on the unit are extra sensitive to odours.
- **Smoking** is not allowed anywhere on hospital grounds.

From your Health Care Team

Please Mention Any Side Effects Early

It is very important you let your nurses and doctors know of any changes in your condition or symptoms, as minor as they may seem. Sometimes we may “watch and monitor” a symptom you mention, sometimes we may need to investigate it further or act on it right away. We count on you to let us know how you’re feeling.

When you mention a side effect early, it can:

- Be managed better
- Allow us to help you feel more comfortable.
- Decrease the chance of complications.
- Allow us to teach you about this side effect

Clutter causes germs!

Please use the cupboards and drawers to store personal items so housekeeping staff can properly clean your tables and window ledge. Do not use tape or pushpins on the wall, use cork board or blue tack for pictures and cards. Limit the amount of belongings in your room - the more belongings you have, the harder it is to clean, the more at risk you are for infection.

Safety

If you are feeling weak or lightheaded, please take your time when getting up out of bed. Sit at the side of your bed with your feet on the floor until you are ready to stand up. If you need help getting up, please call the nurses. It is much safer for them to help you than for you to fall and injure yourself (and prolong your stay in hospital).

Confidentiality

For confidentiality and security reasons, staff cannot give any patient information over the phone to anyone who calls in. Some suggestions to keep your family members informed are to use the speaker phone mode when the doctor is in the room. Setting up a telephone password with staff is another way to call in for information, ask your nurse for details. Always ask our health care staff's permission if you are recording them.

Bedside Commodes

If you are in a shared room, you may be asked to use a bedside commode if your roommate is on precautionary isolation. This means you will not be able to enter the bathroom in your room until we determine the source of infection. We understand how much of a concern this may be but infection control and safety for you and all patients is our priority. We monitor all potential infections closely; those that need to be isolated further will be moved to another room. Speak with your nurse on how you can be more comfortable during this time.

Advice from Former Patients and Caregivers

- “Have family bring you meals. Have your own clothes to wear. Bring things to pass the time.”
- “Outbreaks may occur. This can limit how many visitors you can have.”
- “Invest in the premium Wi-Fi. Just know that it is only good for the device you sign in with.”
- “People will want to bring you things, you will want things but think about it first or you will get cluttered up. It’s ok to say no to gifts.”
- “Everyone will see you in the first day or two. You will forget half of what they tell you. It’s ok to ask for a repeat visit.”
- “It can be hard to understand people through (face) masks. Ask again or have them write it down.”
- “Keep a note pad and write down things as you think of them.”
- “When I was on T15, I didn't have interest to read a book or to hold my phone.... Especially when I couldn't sleep...I preferred to listen to something, either radio or youtube. Listening is better, no flipping pages or holding objects - just listen. If some patients have similar issues like me, audio is the best choice.”
- “There are printers and scanners available for use in the CIBC Centre for Patient and Families. It is located near the front lobby’s help desk on the 1st floor of VGH.”
- “The front doors of VGH close from 11:30pm to 6am every night and you can get locked out. The entrance by the emergency room (off 10th street) is always open.”

While you are in the hospital, friends and relatives can write to you at the following address:

Your Name and Room Number
15th floor JPP (or 14th floor)
Vancouver General Hospital
899 West 12th Avenue
Vancouver, BC
V5Z 1M9

What Could I Bring to Hospital?

Please keep in mind that less is better. It is difficult to clean cluttered surfaces and we cannot stress enough how important infection control practices are.

Items you may find useful during your hospital stay:

- Loose fitting clothing (pajamas, sweat pants, etc.) Shirts with buttons up the front are ideal. Pajama tops & pants are available on unit
- Non-slip slippers, sneakers, and/or socks with traction
- Soft hat or scarves
- 1 pillow & 1 blanket from home – Linens are available on the unit
- Any medical aids you use at home, if possible (i.e. canes, wheeled walkers, etc.)
- Soft toothbrush, lip balm, fragrance-free soaps and lotions, toothpaste without whitening, deodorant, floss, baby wipes. Soap & lotion are available on the unit.
- Electric shaver - Using razor blades can cause bleeding issues.
- Pictures of family/friends/pets/places – Please only use blue tack or magnets to display pictures. Tape and tacks create holes and dust in the wall.
- Eye shields and ear plugs if you're easily disturbed by light or noise.
- Cell phones and chargers.
- Laptops, tablets, portable consoles (There is free basic Wi-Fi on the unit. Most patients prefer to pay for premium Wi-Fi for streaming movies and television.)
- Non-perishable snacks and utensils - No fridge is available for patient use.
- Small cooler – Please clean and bring home this cooler home every night.
- Popsicles – Give them to a nurse right away (the box can't enter a patient's room)
- Headphones for television, music, audiobooks, podcasts, etc.
- Books, small religious items, colouring books and colours, etc.
- Small amount of cash

Please be careful with valuable items, the hospital is not responsible if they become lost or broken. Avoid leaving phones, glasses, etc. hidden in bed sheets or on meal trays.

What Can I Not Bring to Hospital?

- **Kettles, hot plates, rice cookers, or any small appliances** – these are safety and fire hazards to you and our staff. Some medications can make you drowsy and you can seriously burn or injure yourself with these types of items in the room.
- **Electric blanket, heating pad, hot water bottles** –Chemotherapy and radiation treatments make your skin more sensitive. These items can seriously burn you.
- **Fans and electric coolers** – Fans blow dust and bacteria around.
- **Consoles, TVs, fridges, furniture** – These items are too big in our small rooms and a safety hazard to you and our staff.

Practical Items available by request:

- Water and ice
- Ginger ale, juice, sandwiches, and a limited selection of snack items.
- Popsicles
- Toothbrush and toothpaste
- Soaps and moisturizing lotions
- Aromatherapy oils (helpful if you're feeling nauseated)
- Ear plugs
- Portable sitz baths and salt
- **Linens, warm blankets and hospital pyjamas** - Staff can provide you with linens, warm blankets, towels, face cloths and pajamas from the linen cart, please do not help yourself. This is for infection control purposes.

Every 12 hours, the nursing staff changes shift and have a 1 hour handover time from:

- 7:00 am to 8am; and
- 7:00 pm to 8pm.

We request that you keep these non-urgent requests to a minimum during this 1 hour period of handover time. This time is needed to update us on your condition and prepare a plan to support you for the upcoming shift.