

Your Rights and Protections Against Surprise Medical Bills

When you get emergency care or get treated by an out-of-network provider at an in-network hospital or ambulatory surgical center, you are protected from surprise billing or balance billing.

What is “balance billing” (sometimes called “surprise billing”)?

When you see a doctor or other health care provider, you may owe certain out-of-pocket costs, such as a copayment, coinsurance, and/or a deductible. You may have other costs or have to pay the entire bill if you see a provider or visit a health care facility that isn’t in your health plan’s network.

“Out-of-network” describes providers and facilities that haven’t signed a contract with your health plan. Out-of-network providers may be permitted to bill you for the difference between what your plan agreed to pay and the full amount charged for a service. This is called **“balance billing.”** This amount is likely more than in-network costs for the same service and might not count toward your annual out-of-pocket limit.

“Surprise billing” is an unexpected balance bill. This can happen when you can’t control who is involved in your care—like when you have an emergency or when you schedule a visit at an in-network facility but are unexpectedly treated by an out-of-network provider.

You are protected from balance billing for:

Emergency services

If you have an emergency medical condition and get emergency services from an out-of-network provider or facility, the most the provider or facility may bill you is your plan’s in-network cost-sharing amount (such as copayments and coinsurance). You **can’t** be balance billed for these emergency services. This includes services you may get after you’re in stable condition, unless you give written consent and give up your protections not to be balanced billed for these post-stabilization services.

Certain services at an in-network hospital or ambulatory surgical center

When you get services from an in-network hospital or ambulatory surgical center, certain providers there may be out-of-network. In these cases, the most those providers may bill you is your plan’s in-network cost-sharing amount. This applies to emergency medicine, anesthesia, pathology, radiology, laboratory, neonatology, assistant surgeon, hospitalist, or intensivist services. These providers **can’t** balance bill you and may **not** ask you to give up your protections not to be balance billed.

If you get other types of services at these in-network facilities, out-of-network providers can’t balance bill you, unless you give written consent and give up your protections.

You're never required to give up your protections from balance billing. You also aren't required to get care out-of-network. You can choose a provider or facility in your plan's network.

In Louisiana, professional services rendered by independent healthcare professionals are not part of the hospital bill. These services may be billed to you separately. Please understand that physicians or other healthcare professionals may be called upon to provide care or services to you on your behalf, but you may not actually see, or be examined by, all physicians or healthcare professionals participating in your care; for example, you may not see physicians providing radiology, pathology, and EKG interpretation. In many instances, there will be a separate charge for professional services rendered by physicians to you or on your behalf, and you will receive a bill for these professional services that is separate from the bill for hospital services. These independent healthcare professionals may not participate in your health plan and you may be responsible for payment of all or part of the fees for the services provided by these physicians who have provided out-of-network services, in addition to applicable amounts due for copayment, coinsurance, deductibles, and non-covered services.

We encourage you to contact your health plan to determine whether the independent healthcare professionals are participating with your health plan. In order to obtain the most accurate and up-to-date information about in-network and out of network independent healthcare professionals, please contact the customer service number of your health plan or visit its website. Your health plan is the primary source of information on its provider network benefits. To help determine whether the independent healthcare professionals who provide services are participating with your health plan, we will provide you with a complete list of names and contact information for each individual or group.

When balance billing isn't allowed, you also have the following protections:

- You are only responsible for paying your share of the cost (like the copayments, coinsurance, and deductibles that you would pay if the provider or facility was in-network). Your health plan will pay out-of-network providers and facilities directly.
- Generally, your health plan must:
 - Cover emergency services without requiring you to get approval for services in advance (prior authorization).
 - Cover emergency services by out-of-network providers.
 - Base what you owe the provider or facility (cost-sharing) on what it would pay an in-network provider or facility and show that amount in your explanation of benefits.
 - Count any amount you pay for emergency services or out-of-network services toward your deductible and out-of-pocket limit.

If you believe you've been wrongly billed, you may contact 318-212-4030.

Visit www.cms.gov/nosurprises/consumers and www.wkhs.com for more information about your rights under federal and state law.

