

Your Rights and Protections Against Surprise Medical Bills

When you get emergency care or are treated by an out-of-network provider at an in-network hospital or ambulatory surgical center, you are protected from balance billing. In these cases, you shouldn't be charged more than your plan's copayments, coinsurance and/or deductible.

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, like a copayment, coinsurance, or deductible. You may have additional 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 and/or your plan does not cover out-of-network services.

"Out-of-network" means providers and facilities that haven't signed a contract with your health plan to provide services. Out-of-network providers may be allowed to bill you for the difference between what your plan pays and the full amount charged for a service. This is called "**balance billing.**" This amount is likely more than your in-network costs for the same service and might not count toward your plan's deductible or annual out-of-pocket limit. Your health plan coverage may not cover out-of-network services when you agree (consent) to receive services from the out-of-network providers.

"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. Surprise medical bills could cost thousands of dollars depending on the procedure or service. Providers and facilities are not balance billing you when they seek to collect cost sharing or another amount that you agreed to pay or are required to pay under your plan for the services that they provided.

You're 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 they can bill you is your plan's in-network cost-sharing amount (such as copayments, coinsurance, and deductibles). 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 balance billed for these post-stabilization services.

The Georgia Surprise Billing Consumer Protection Act protects you from surprise medical bills when your health plan is either a fully-insured plan or a self-funded plan that has elected to be bound by this Georgia law and you receive emergency services from a doctor or hospital that is not contracted with your health plan or medical group. In these circumstances, providers and hospitals cannot bill you more than your in-network cost sharing.

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 can 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, or when an in-network provider is not available. 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 out-of-network care. You can choose a provider or facility in your plan's network.

The Georgia Surprise Billing Consumer Protection Act protects you from surprise medical bills when your health plan is either a fully-insured plan or self-funded plan that has elected to be bound by this Georgia law. You are protected from providers and facilities billing you for amounts owed (except a cost sharing amount) for emergency services when the state law applies. When you receive non-emergency services at an in-network facility such as a hospital, ambulatory surgery center, laboratory, or imaging center, and the non-emergency services are delivered by an out-of-network provider, then you are protected from the provider billing you more than your in-network cost sharing.

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

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

If you think you've been wrongly billed by a provider or facility, contact the federal government at: **1-800-985-3059** or the Office of Commissioner of Insurance and Safety Fire at <https://oci.georgia.gov/file-consumer-insurance-complaint> or call **1-800-656-2298**.

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

Visit <https://oci.georgia.gov/news/2020-12-30/office-commissioner-insurance-and-safety-fire-posts-final-surprise-billing> for more information about your rights under Georgia state law.