



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.

"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 in-network costs for the same service and might not count toward your plan's deductible or 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. Surprise medical bills could cost thousands of dollars depending on the procedure or service.

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.

Where applicable, you may also be protected under state law against balance

billing for out-of-network emergency services. In California, such state balance billing protections apply for plans regulated by the California Department of Managed Health Care.

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. 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.

Where applicable, you may also be protected under state law against balance billing for services provided by out-of-network providers at in-network facilities. In California, such balance billing protections apply for plans regulated by the California Department of Managed Health Care and the California Department of Insurance. These protections apply to the following types of facilities: hospitals, ambulatory surgery centers and other outpatient settings, laboratories, and radiology and imaging centers.

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:
 - Cover emergency services without requiring you to get approval for services in advance (also known as "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 in-network deductible and out-of-pocket limit.

If you think you've been wrongly billed, contact Blue Shield of California (Blue Shield) by calling the toll-free number located on your Blue Shield member ID card or (800) 393-6130. You can also contact the California Department of Managed Health Care (DMHC) online at **dmhc.ca.gov** or by calling toll-free 1-888-466-2219 or by calling their TDD line (1-877-688-9891) for assistance or for more information about your rights and protections against surprise medical bills.

You may also contact Blue Shield of California Life & Health Insurance Company (Blue Shield Life) by calling the toll-free number located on your Blue Shield member ID card or (800) 393-6130. You can also contact **www.insurance.ca.gov** online or by calling 1-800-927-4357 for assistance or for more information about your rights and protections against surprise medical bills.

If your plan is subject to ERISA, you can also contact the nearest Regional or District Office of the U.S. Department of Labor's Employee Benefits Security Administration (EBSA) in your area or visit the EBSA website at **www.dol.gov/ebsa**. Addresses and phone numbers of Regional and District EBSA Offices are available through EBSA's website **www.dol.gov/agencies/ebsa/about-ebsa/about-us/regional-offices**.

If your plan is not subject to ERISA, visit the CMS website at **www.cms.gov/CCIIO/Programs-and-Initiatives/Health-Insurance-Market-Reforms/nonfedgovplans** or call (800) 985-3059.

Visit **cms.gov/nosurprises** or **www.dol.gov/ebsa** for more information about under federal law.