Freestanding ERs: Astronomical costs tell the real story

**Average Total ER Costs in Major Metro Areas**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>FSER</th>
<th>Hospital-Based Emergency Department</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>$1,431</td>
<td>$1,842</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>$1,622</td>
<td>$1,970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>$1,830</td>
<td>$2,108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>$2,199</td>
<td>$2,259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>$2,630</td>
<td>$2,366</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Free-standing ERs had a 63% increase in costs as opposed to a 23% increase in costs for hospital-based ERs.
- Average allowed cost per free-standing visit is now $120 more than a hospital-based visit.

**Average Total ER Costs Statewide**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>FSER</th>
<th>Hospital-Based Emergency Department</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>$1,371</td>
<td>$1,726</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>$1,497</td>
<td>$1,829</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>$1,807</td>
<td>$1,972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>$2,238</td>
<td>$2,115</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Average allowed cost per free-standing visit is now $120 more than a hospital-based visit.
### Freestanding ER
- Open 24 hours, seven days a week
- Could be transferred to a hospital ER based on medical situation
- Services do not include trauma care
- Multiple bills for services such as doctor and facility
- Many freestanding ERs are out-of-network. If you receive care from an out-of-network provider, you may have to pay more. Providers outside the network may “balance bill” you, which means they may charge you more than your health plan’s fee schedule.

### Hospital ER
- Open 24 hours, seven days a week
- Average wait time is 4 hours, 7 minutes
- Multiple bills for services such as doctor and facility
- Some freestanding ERs are owned by in-network hospitals. You’ll likely pay less at a contracted emergency department or hospital FSER. You may only be responsible for your copay and coinsurance if you’ve met your deductible. In-network providers have a contract with your health plan and are prohibited from “balance billing” you.

### Doctor’s Office
- Office hours vary
- Generally the best place to go for non-emergency care
- Doctor-to-patient relationship established and therefore able to treat based on knowledge of medical history
- Average wait time is 24 minutes

### Retail Health Clinic
- Based upon retail store hours
- Usually lower out-of-pocket cost to you than urgent care
- Often located in stores and pharmacies to provide convenient, low-cost treatment for minor medical problems

### Urgent Care Provider
- Generally includes evenings, weekends and holidays
- Often used when your doctor’s office is closed, and there is no true emergency
- Average wait time is 11-20 minutes
- Many have online and/or telephone check-in

### What can you do?
Passage of legislation is critical to protecting consumers from the impact that FSERs have on rising health care costs. Texas legislators can help consumers by supporting these bills:

- **SB 507** by Sen. Hancock/HB 1566 by Rep. Frullo — expand the current TDI mediation process to allow consumers to challenge surprise medical bills from FSERs and other providers in emergency situations.
- **SB 2064** by Sen. Hancock/HB 3867 by Rep. Smithee — Hold the bad actors accountable for market behavior that exploits patients with an exorbitant pricing structure.
- **SB 1592** by Sen. Charles Schwertner — increases administrative penalties on FSERs who do not comply with notice and disclosure requirements.
- **SB 2240** by Sen. Larry Taylor/HB 3099 by Rep. Paul — require specific disclosure and notice provisions by FSERs about participation in health plan networks and in some cases their charges.

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2. Urgent Care Benchmarking Study Results. Journal of Urgent Care Medicine, January 2012.

Note: The relative costs described here are for independently contracted network providers. Your costs for out-of-network providers may be significantly higher. Wait times described are just estimates.