KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Not all providers and facilities take all types of health plans. Check with the office before your appointment to make sure they accept patients with your coverage.

Differences Between Your Provider's Office and the Emergency Department

Primary Care Provider	Emergency Department
You'll pay your primary care copay, if you have one. This may cost you between $0 and $50.	You'll likely pay a copay, coinsurance, and have to meet your deductible before your health plan pays for your costs, especially if it's not an emergency. Your copay may be between $50 and $150.
You go when you feel sick and when you feel well.	You should only go when you're injured or very sick.
You call ahead to make an appointment.	You show up when you need to and wait until they can get to you.
You may have a short wait to see the provider after you arrive. But you will usually be seen around your appointment time.	You may wait for several hours before you're seen if it's not an emergency.
You'll usually see the same provider each time.	You'll see the provider who is working that day.
Your provider will usually have your health record.	The provider who sees you probably won't have access to your health records.
Your provider works with you to take care of your chronic conditions and your overall health.	The provider may not know what chronic conditions you have.
Your provider will check other areas of your health, not just the problem that brought you in that day.	The provider will only check the urgent problem you came in to treat, but might not ask about other concerns.
If you need to see other providers or manage your care, your primary care provider can help you make a plan, get your medicines, and find specialists.	When your visit is over you will get instructions to follow up with your provider. There may not be any follow-up support.

What about urgent care?

In some areas, you may be able to go to an Urgent Care Center. Call your health plan before you go to find out how much you will have to pay. Typically, Urgent Care Centers may have more flexible hours or walk-in visits and are able to handle many sick visits and other types of care. However, urgent care usually has a higher copay or coinsurance than a provider's office, and you may not see the same provider each time. You can share the medical records from Urgent Care visits with your primary care provider so that your provider has all of your health information.

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