

High Cost of Colonoscopy Anesthesia

Written by Administrator
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From the [New York Times](#) .

Patients who undergo colonoscopy usually receive anesthesia of some sort in order to “sleep” through the procedure. But as one Long Island couple discovered recently, it can be a very expensive nap.

Both husband and wife selected gastroenterologists who participated in their insurance plan to perform their cancer screenings. But in both cases, the gastroenterologists chose full anesthesia with Propofol, a powerful drug that must be administered by an anesthesiologist, instead of moderate, or “conscious,” sedation that often gastroenterologists can administer themselves.

And in both cases, the gastroenterologists were assisted in the procedure by anesthesiologists who were not covered by the couple’s insurance. They billed the couple’s insurance at rates far higher than any plan would reimburse — two to four times as high, experts say.

But there’s a bigger problem for consumers here, too. Many physicians who are not the primary contact with patients — like pathologists and radiologists as well as anesthesiologists — do not participate in health insurance plans. When they provide medical services at hospitals or outpatient centers, their charges may not be covered, or may be only partly covered, leaving even well-insured people with large, unexpected bills.

So, what to do if you need a colonoscopy?

CONSIDER ALTERNATIVES Other recommended colon cancer screening methods include the fecal occult blood test, which involves collecting stool samples at home, and sigmoidoscopy, in which a long, flexible tube with a tiny video camera is used to examine the lower colon. Indeed, a study published in The New England Journal of Medicine last week found that [patients who underwent sigmoidoscopy had lower rates of colon cancer and lower cancer death rates](#)

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