

Patient FAQs: UW Medicine and Premera contract negotiations
05/16/2023

OVERVIEW

UW Medicine is working to renegotiate their contracts with Premera Blue Cross for commercial and Medicare Advantage plans that are scheduled to end on July 1, 2023. UW Medicine is concerned about its patients and committed to continuing contract discussions to negotiate reimbursement rates that fairly address the cost of providing care.

While UW Medicine is in negotiations to extend their agreements, patients need to know that their care may no longer be covered at current levels beginning July 1 if the contracts expire without new ones in place. This means that patients with Premera insurance who receive care from a physician employed by UW Medicine may not be covered at current levels by Premera. Since most Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center physicians are employed by UW Medicine, patients may be responsible for a larger share, up to the full cost, of services provided by Fred Hutch physicians beginning July 1.

These contracts include the following UW Medicine-affiliated providers and facilities:

- UW Medical Center – Northwest & Montlake
- Harborview Medical Center
- UW Medicine primary care, urgent care, and specialty care clinics
- Valley Medical Center
- All providers, including specialists, primary care providers, and other healthcare professionals practicing at UW Medicine. This includes services provided by UW healthcare professionals at Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center

Our hope is that UW Medicine and Premera will come to an agreement before the contract termination date. In the meantime, Fred Hutch is making every effort to avoid disruption to patient care for current patients, and we are working closely with UW Medicine on potential continuity of care plans. We will provide additional updates as information becomes available.

See the FAQs below and visit uwmedicine.org/premera for more information.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Who would be affected by this contract expiration?

This potential expiration will affect all patients with Premera Blue Cross commercial or Medicare Advantage coverage who receive care at UW Medicine locations including UW Medical Center, Harborview Medical Center, Valley Medical Center and clinics, UW Neighborhood Clinics and services provided by UW Physicians at Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center.

How would this change impact patients seen at Fred Hutch?

Fred Hutch is a hospital-based facility. Hospital-based facilities bill a patient's care in two parts: a physician fee and a facility fee. If UW Medicine and Premera do not agree on new contracts, the physician fee at Fred Hutch may not be covered at current levels beginning July 1. If patients would like to learn what their out-of-pocket costs would be, they should contact Premera directly.

The facility fee portion of a patient's bill, which includes charges such as clinic visits, infusion, equipment, and supplies, will still be covered under their Premera plan because Fred Hutch's contract with Premera will remain in place. This means a patient's care will continue to be covered at current levels-for those services.

What would this mean for patients under active treatment and care?

In the event of a contract termination, a federal law called the No Surprises Act requires that health insurance companies provide continuity of care benefits to patients receiving treatment for a covered serious and complex or chronic medical condition, which could include their cancer care. Fred Hutch and UW Medicine would make every effort to avoid disruption of patient care and work with Premera to maintain ongoing coverage. If approved, they can continue care at the current in-network benefit level for up to 90 days.

[Learn more about the No Surprises Act here.](#)