

# 18 Million Avoidable Hospital Emergency Department Visits Add \$32 Billion in Costs to the Health Care System Each Year

Primary care services are delivered by hospital emergency departments (EDs) to millions of privately insured individuals each year at substantially higher prices than in primary care settings.

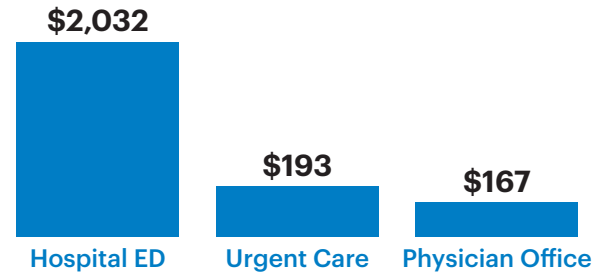
## High Cost of Primary Care in Hospital EDs

The average cost of treating 10 common primary care treatable conditions\* at a hospital ED is \$2,032, more than \$1,800 higher than in primary care settings.<sup>1</sup>

The Hospital Emergency Department cost is:

- **12 times higher** than at a physician office (\$167)
- **10 times higher** than at an urgent care center (\$193)

### Average Cost for Primary Care Treatable Conditions, 2018



Higher costs at hospital EDs are driven in part by:



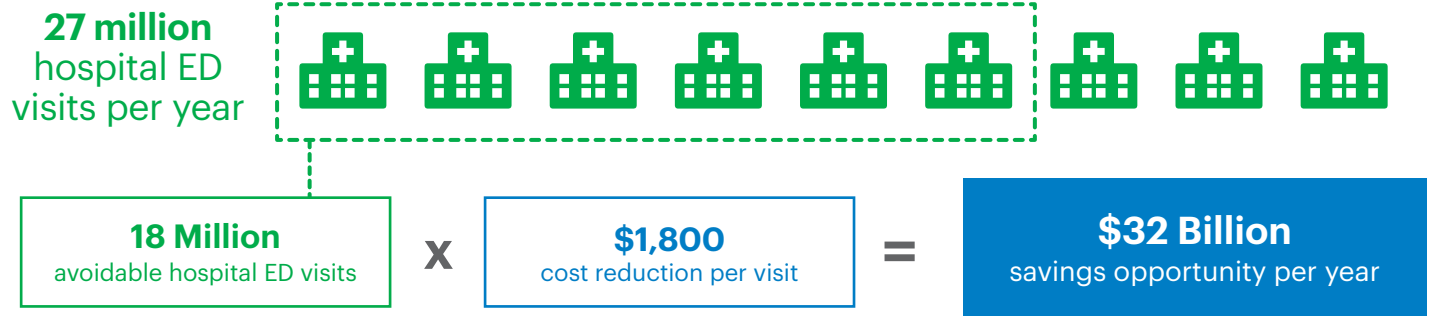
Hospital facility fees, which increase the cost of an average ED visit by **\$1,069**



Lab, pathology, and radiology services, which average **\$335** at an ED, 10 times more costly than at a physician office (\$31)

## Overuse of Hospital EDs for Primary Care

Two-thirds of hospital ED visits annually by privately insured individuals in the U.S. – 18 out of 27 million\*\* – are avoidable. These patients can be treated safely and effectively in high-quality, low-cost primary care settings.<sup>2</sup>



\* 10 common primary care treatable conditions frequently treated at EDs: bronchitis, cough, dizziness, flu, headache, low back pain, nausea, sore throat, strep throat, and upper respiratory infection.

\*\* 27 million of 46 million annual ED visits are classified as either primary care treatable or ED needed. 19 million ED visits are not classified.

Methodology and sources for citations, and to learn more about primary care capacity and access: [www.unitedhealthgroup.com/primarycare](http://www.unitedhealthgroup.com/primarycare).