

For Your Information: **Colonoscopies**

As you may be aware, our health plans offer coverage for preventive colonoscopies at 100%. We have learned that some gastroenterologists who perform colonoscopies are using a form of anesthesia that is not covered by our plans. When receiving a colonoscopy, most patients receive moderate (or conscious) sedation. Moderate sedation is a drug-induced depression of consciousness during which patients respond purposefully to verbal command. Although patients are semi-conscious during the procedure, most patients don't remember much about it afterwards. This type of sedation is endorsed by three gastroenterology societies for uncomplicated cases and can be administered by the gastroenterologists themselves.

An alternative to moderate (or conscious) sedation is full anesthesia, often called deep sedation. This is typically performed with the drug Propofol, a powerful sedative that must be administered and monitored by an anesthesiologist. This can be an expensive option as the anesthesiologist's fee is not covered by our health insurance unless it is determined to be medically necessary in cases of age, illness, or a prior history of complications with sedating drugs.

Locally, Digestive Care Center in Evansville is currently using the deep sedation method and contracting with an anesthesiologist to administer the anesthesia. Digestive Care Center is currently not in the Aetna Choice POS II network that we use, but we expect them to be in-network in the coming months. With that said, as you look for in-network gastroenterologists to perform these services, we want you to be informed. If you are scheduling a colonoscopy, be sure to ask what type of sedation will be used when making your appointment. If it is full anesthesia, you can either find another gastroenterologist who will administer "conscious sedation" or determine in advance what the charges will be for full anesthesia as this will not be covered by your health plan, unless it is medically necessary.

