better than the mean for summarizing averages in healthcare. This is because it represents the amount that a procedure is most likely to cost. It is less likely to be influenced by extreme values. See the example below.

Example: Calculating Costs for Blood Tests at Two Facilities

In this example, the costs are the same at the two labs for the first four patients' blood tests. But, Patient E's blood test costs $200 more at Lab 2 than at Lab 1. The median or middle value stayed the same at the two labs. But the mean cost for blood testing is $40 more at Lab 2 (bumped up by the more expensive testing for one patient, Patient E). The median cost, $100, is a better example of what blood testing costs.

Patient	Lab 1 Costs	Lab 2 Costs
Patient A's Blood Test	$50	$50
Patient B's Blood Test	$50	$50
Patient C's Blood Test	$100	$100
Patient D's Blood Test	$100	$100
Patient E's Blood Test	$150	$350
Total Sum of Blood Testing	**$450**	**$650**
MEDIAN Cost (middle value in list, Patient C)	**$100**	**$100**
MEAN (Total Sum/Total Number of Tests)	**$90**	**$130**

Some services like office visits or physical therapy appointments are measured in time increments. On CompareMaine, we calculate the median cost of the entire visit, not a time increment. For example, physical therapy services are often measured in 15-minute increments. The cost estimate you see is for the average total visit, not for each 15 minutes of therapy.

When you use CompareMaine, you can filter it by a specific insurance company. If you don't choose an insurance company, the cost shown is the median cost for the test or service at the facility across all insurance companies.