

Here's the 411 on Travel Health Insurance

HTH Worldwide

What Senior Travelers need to know

Scores of senior travelers are reaching all corners of the globe on leisure, business and educational trips. And as international travel expands, so do health and safety concerns. Pandemics and terrorist attacks are a reality, but many senior travelers have the added challenge of managing chronic conditions exacerbated by sleep loss, dietary changes and increased physical exertion. Given the heightened risks, savvy senior travelers are preparing more than ever to avoid potential hazards.

Why Has Travel Health Insurance Increased in Popularity?

Recent growth in the sales of travel health insurance is tied to greater consumer awareness of health risks and insurance gaps. The simple fact is that most existing health insurance benefits shrink or disappear when travelers cross the U.S. border. Medicare provides no protection overseas, while Medicare supplements strictly limit benefits abroad. Critically, most policies do not pay to get you to a high standard of care should you need to be evacuated due to a medical emergency. More and more, senior travelers are becoming aware of the many gaps and limitations and are not leaving things to chance.

What Will a Good Travel Health Policy Do for You?

Travel health insurance policies are designed to pick up your medical expenses when you leave home. If you are covered under Medicare, these plans act as your primary insurance while abroad. Travel health insurance also fills critical gaps when taking Medicare supplemental plans overseas. For example, Medicare supplements typically cover emergencies up to \$50,000 and are subject to a \$250 deductible and 20% coinsurance. In this case, the benefit gap that opens on a \$100,000 hospitalization followed by a medical evacuation of \$25,000 will cost the unfortunate traveler \$85,000 (\$60,000 on the hospital bill and \$25,000 for the evacuation charge).

The best designed plans offer more than emergency benefits. They cover everything from hospitalization and surgery to physician office visits, ambulance services, and prescription medications. The premier plans make it a point to cover sickness or injury resulting from a pre-existing medical condition or a terrorist event without limitations. Some policies even pay medical providers overseas on a direct basis so you can avoid the paperwork hassles that come with filing a claim.

Admitted Coverage versus Non-Admitted Coverage

Senior travelers should know that there can be big differences in their rights when they buy travel health insurance. Some plans are licensed and regulated in the U.S. while others are issued offshore beyond the reach of your state's Department of Insurance. In fact, most evacuation membership plans are not regulated or even backed by a rated insurance carrier. U.S. licensed and approved plans are called "admitted insurance" and afford members the strongest consumer protections. Your personal health and financial security hang in the balance.

**Travel health insurance policies bridge the
Medicare gaps.**

Admitted Health Insurance Advantages Include:

1. Consumer Protection

You are protected under U.S. insurance laws and oversight. U.S laws are strict and favor health care consumers. Policy language must be fair and meet the plain English definition. Policy wording, plan definitions, exclusions, claims turnaround times, formal appeals process etc. all must meet regulatory muster.

2. Global Provider Networks

What good is insurance if you can't find a doctor you trust? The best plans give you access to the best providers. They set up providers to bill the insurance company directly. In addition, providers are selected based on their medical credentials, language proficiency and more. Always ask the insurer what their credentialing process entails.

3. Richer Benefits

Admitted benefits tend to be broader and deeper with fewer surprises at time of claim. The table below illustrates major differences between an admitted policy and a popular non admitted policy.

Coverage Considerations

Sample Provisions Admitted Policy

Sample Provisions Non-Admitted Policy

Conforms to U.S. health insurance laws	✓	✗
Pre-existing conditions covered to policy limit*	✓	✗
Terrorism covered with no excluded countries	✓	✗
Pre-certification not required for hospitalization	✓	✗
Cashless access to profiled physicians and hospitals in 180 countries	✓	✗

*Pre-existing conditions coverage may be subject to current enrollment in Medicare.

Healthy, Safe Travel

Enjoy peace of mind with a well built travel health plan. As with everything in life, it is a good idea to do your home work. Always ensure that you read the fine print rather than just scanning a benefit schedule. Ask your broker or insurance company to send you a sample policy so you can get a complete picture of what you're buying.