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Read the fine print if you're travelling with credit-card insurance

More credit cards with travel insurance benefits are now extending limited coverage to seniors but the ages covered and the duration of coverage is different on every card.

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FILE PHOTO

Travel insurance offered through credit cards have limitations for pre-existing medical conditions or injuries. Make sure you read the fine print.

By: [Sheryl Smolkin](#) At Work, Published on Sun Jan 05 2014

More credit cards with travel insurance benefits are now extending limited coverage to seniors but the ages covered and the duration of coverage is different on every card.

And unless you have carefully reviewed the exclusions in your credit card's travel insurance contract, don't assume you are covered just because you have been issued a specific card.

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The online insurance-rating website InsurEye recently analyzed more than 180 Canadian credit cards, [creating a ranking of the top credit cards](#) for Canadian travelers. Their analysis was based on eight travel insurance features including travel medical protection, trip interruption coverage and travel cancellation protection.

InsureEye's top five cards for 2013 and the eligibility provisions for travel medical coverage are listed below.

1. **Desjardins Visa Odyssey Gold:** Age 59 or under: 48 days; age 60-64: 23 days; age 65-75: 15 days; age 76 or older: no coverage.

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2. **National Platinum MasterCard and National World MasterCard:** Age 54 or under: 60 days; age 55 to 64: 31 days; age 65 to 74: 15 days.

3. **Desjardins Visa Platinum:** Age 59 or under: 48 days; age 60-64: 23 days; age 65-75: 15 days; age 76 or older: no coverage.

4. **Scotiabank Gold Amex:** Under age 65: Up to 25 consecutive days; age 65 and older: up to 10 consecutive days.

5. **RBC Rewards Visa Preferred:** Under age 65: Up to 31 consecutive days; age 65 and older: up to 7 consecutive days.

And each card has limitations for pre-existing medical conditions or injuries.

For example, the Scotiabank Gold Amex contract says no benefits are payable for any expenses incurred directly or indirectly as a result of any pre-existing condition. Pre-existing condition means that if within 180 days (under age 75) and within 365 days if you are age 75 or older:

- You saw a doctor for symptoms and were treated;
- Had tests or further tests were recommended;
- Had treatment or further investigation was recommended; or
- Medication was prescribed or altered before departure.

The insurance contract for the top ranking Desjardins Visa Odyssey Gold card specifies that a person age 55 or over is not insured at all for any condition if, within the 6 months preceding the date of each trip, he or she has any similarly defined pre-existing condition. The same restrictions for credit-card holders under the age of 54 apply if a pre-existing condition arose within three months before an individual leaves on vacation.

Because no medical questions are asked when a credit card is issued, the underwriting effectively takes place at the time of claim instead of at the time the policy is issued.

“That means that when there is a claim, the insurance company has a whole department that will order records from OHIP, your doctor and your pharmacy. Any evidence of a pre-existing condition can effectively kill the claim,” says Marty Firestone, the president of Travel Secure Inc.

However, Firestone says if you buy a policy where you are required to complete a basic or more detailed medical questionnaire when you apply for coverage, the terms of the contract are clearly established.

“If you disclosed that you have an ulcer problem that has not been stable for 90 days you may not be covered if you need care because your ulcer acts up when you are travelling. But coverage for a brain tumour or a car accident will not be denied,” he says.

So buyer beware: even if you have a credit card with travel medical coverage, check the fine print in the actual insurance policy carefully.

Regardless of your age, if you are travelling for longer than the insured period covered on the card or if you think your medical history may invalidate the coverage, protect yourself. You can purchase additional coverage more tailored to your needs online, through a group such as the Canadian Automobile Association or from an insurance broker.

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MarkAnevich 3 weeks ago

Thank you for shedding light on a very important subject. Too many Canadian travellers mistakenly assume just because they have a premium credit card they are automatically covered for travel health insurance only to find out too late they do not have the coverage they thought they had.

A recent example is story on CBC News <http://goo.gl/02IUDr> (<http://goo.gl/02IUDr>) reported on a Canadian traveller who suffered severe injuries from boating accident only to be faced with a \$30,000 medical bill because she was not covered under parents' credit card.

The best advice is to contact your credit card provider and find out exactly what coverage you have and if in doubt, don't travel without - travel insurance. For a complete list of credit card programs and summary of benefits visit Rewards Canada @ <http://www.rewardscanada.ca/cccompare.html> (<http://www.rewardscanada.ca/cccompare.html>)

Always travel safe & secure – travel insured

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TheBigBopper 3 weeks ago

Haha funny stuff. We called our insurer to clarify the pre-existing stuff. My wife has an ongoing issue. The phone rep said anything to do with the issue was of course excluded, which we already knew. Then she told us "confidentially" that if anything else came up anywhere in her abdomen or chest they would deny the claim saying it was in relation to a pre-existing condition. No matter what it was they would not pay unless you sue them. She also said if it was an accident they would find a reason to not pay as well due to my wife being on daily blood anti-clotting injections. I wonder if that nice lady still has a job? Canada's a fun place to be in the winter anyway.

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poindexter 4 weeks ago

credit card insurance and Bank loan insurance is not worth a pinch , get proper insurance from a licensed broker who will properly answer all your questions

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