



BE SAFE | BE INFORMED | BE AWARE

FIGHTING FRAUD



Eastern Nebraska Office on Aging
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GET VACCINATED, NOT SCAMMED. Here's how to avoid COVID-19 cons.

*Scammers are promising early coronavirus vaccines. **DON'T FALL FOR IT.***

By Michelle Singletary | Washington Post



The scammers follow current events and create schemes accordingly. So, expect more scams involving coronavirus vaccines.

The United States has begun the distribution of the Pfizer-BioNTech novel coronavirus vaccine to help prevent the spread of the virus, which has killed nearly 300,000

Americans. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) gave emergency use authorization to the first vaccine in the United States last week. A second vaccine, developed by Moderna, is expected to get FDA authorization soon.

States will determine who will get immunized first, with health-care personnel, nursing home residents and their caregivers prioritized as vulnerable populations. But the anticipated delay in distribution to the general population is enough to allow scammers to slip in with fake offers to people hoping to jump the line to get vaccinated.

"While we wait for a timeline and more information, there's no doubt scammers will be scheming," Colleen Tressler, consumer education specialist at the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), wrote in a recent blog post about coronavirus-related cons.

The FBI and the Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Office of Inspector General have also been issuing alerts about the increase in coronavirus fraud as consumer and government agencies ramp up their efforts to protect the public from predators looking to make money off people's fears about getting the virus.

Scammers aren't just using email or telemarketing calls. They are also coming at people via messages on social media platforms, and they're even performing door-to-door visits, HHS says.

Tressler said this is what you need to know to avoid a coronavirus-vaccine-related scam:

— Be skeptical of offers to pay for a vaccine on your behalf. Because the coronavirus is a public health emergency, it's unlikely you will have to pay for the vaccine. "You should also beware of scammers claiming to be medical professionals and demanding payment for treating a friend or relative for COVID-19," the FBI warns.

— No, you can't pay to get your name on a list to get the coronavirus vaccine. Don't fall for scammers' promises about getting early access.

— No, that's not a government official calling you about getting vaccinated. "No one from a vaccine distribution site or health care payer, like a private insurance company, will call you asking for your Social Security number or your credit card or bank account information to sign you up to get the vaccine," Tressler wrote.

— Watch out for offers of alternative cures for the coronavirus. While waiting for a vaccine, don't get so impatient that you become a victim of a scam. If you're concerned about when you can get vaccinated, check with your health-care provider.

For more information about coronavirus-related scams and tips, go to ftc.gov/coronavirus/scams.

And if you fall victim to a scam, report it to the FTC at ReportFraud.ftc.gov or file a complaint with the FTC's consumer protection office. The agencies may not be able to investigate your individual situation, but if enough people complain, the scammers could be shut down.

"Don't pay for a promise of vaccine access or share personal information," Tressler wrote.

DON'T FALL FOR IT!

CHARITY FRAUD



Some charities may sound legitimate or have names very close to that of a well-known charity but are nothing

more than an organization of scam artists. They ask for donations to help those in need, but simply pocket the money instead.

Recognize the warning signs that may indicate a scam:

- You have to make your decision immediately or are told that the people need the donation right away.

- The charity's name sounds legitimate, but you do not recognize it.
- The charity cannot, or will not, send you a brochure or donor form, or does not have a website that you can visit.
- A door-to-door solicitor asks for the donation to be made to him or her personally.
- The solicitor tells you; you can only donate by giving him or her money.
- During a telemarketing call, you are asked to give confidential information such as a bank account or credit card number.

What you should do if you suspect a scam:

To find out if a charity is legitimate, log on to www.give.org.

- Get a number where you can call after you have confirmed their legality.
- Check the number against your local telephone directory to verify it is authentic.
- Ask for a brochure or other written materials to be sent to you in the mail.
- Nebraska Attorney General's Senior Hotline: 888-287-0778

***Information from Nebraska Attorney General - Protect the Good Life website*

TO STOP ELDER ABUSE

Report Abuse and Neglect of the Elderly or Vulnerable Adults

Call **1-800-652-1999**

Nebraska Adult Protective Services



*Calls can be made anonymously



Are you 60 years of age or older?

Do you have a problem with:

- debt collections
- Medicare/Medicaid
- being a tenant
- homestead exemptions
- reverse mortgages
- POAs

Legal Aid of Nebraska is here to help!

Legal Aid provides free legal advice and assistance to Nebraska residents 60 years of age and older through our ElderAccessLine.

Reach our ElderAccessLine® toll-free at:

1-800-527-7249

Monday-Friday: 9 a.m. - Noon*

Monday-Thursday: 1 p.m. - 3 p.m.*

*Central time zone

