

Scammers Have You In Their Sights.

Learn Financial Self-Defense!

Thirty percent of all scam victims are older than 65. Criminals specifically target this group. In this report, The National Council on Aging warns you about the latest tricks to tap your funds and informs you how to protect yourself!



Scam 1:

Health Care/Medicare/Health Insurance Fraud

Every U.S. citizen or permanent resident over age 65 qualifies for Medicare, so there is rarely any need for a scam artist to research what private health insurance company older people have in order to scam them out of some money.

In these types of scams, perpetrators may pose as a Medicare representative to get older people to give them their personal information, or they will provide bogus services for older people at makeshift mobile clinics, then use the personal information they provide to bill Medicare and pocket the money.

Scam 2:

Counterfeit Prescription Drugs

Most commonly, counterfeit drug scams operate on the Internet, where older people increasingly go to find better prices on specialized medications.

The danger is that besides paying money for something that will not help a person's medical condition, victims may purchase unsafe substances that can inflict even more harm. This scam can be as hard on the body as it is on the wallet.

Scam 3:

Funeral & Cemetery Scams

Scammers will read obituaries and call or attend the funeral service of a complete

stranger to take advantage of the grieving widow or widower. Claiming the deceased had an outstanding debt with them, scammers will try to extort money from relatives to settle the fake debts.

Another tactic of disreputable funeral homes is to capitalize on family members' unfamiliarity with the considerable cost of funeral services to add unnecessary charges to the bill.

In one common scam of this type, funeral directors will insist that a casket, usually one of the most expensive parts of funeral services, is necessary even when performing a direct cremation, which can be accomplished with a cardboard casket rather than an expensive display or burial casket.

Scam 4:

Fraudulent Anti-Aging Products

Many older Americans seek out new treatments and medications to maintain a youthful appearance, putting them at risk of scammers.

Whether it's fake Botox like the one in Arizona that netted its distributors \$1.5 million in barely a year, or completely bogus homeopathic remedies that do absolutely nothing, there is money in the anti-aging business.

Botox scams are particularly unsettling, as renegade labs creating versions of the real thing may still be working with the root ingredient, botulism neurotoxin, which is

one of the most toxic substances known to science.

Scam 5:

Telemarketing

With no face-to-face interaction, and no paper trail, these scams are incredibly hard to trace. Also, once a successful deal has been made, the buyer's name is then shared with similar schemers looking for easy targets, sometimes defrauding the same person repeatedly.

Examples of telemarketing fraud include:

"The Pigeon Drop"

The con artist tells the individual that he/she has found a large sum of money and is willing to split it if the person will make a "good faith" payment by withdrawing funds from his/her bank account. Often, a second con artist is involved, posing as a lawyer, banker, or some other trustworthy stranger.

"The Fake Accident Ploy"

The con artist gets the victim to wire or send money on the pretext that the person's child or another relative is in the hospital and needs the money.

"Charity Scams"

Money is solicited for fake charities. This often occurs after natural disasters.

Scam 6:

Internet Fraud

Older people's unfamiliarity with the less visible aspects of browsing the web (firewalls and built-in virus protection, for example) make them especially susceptible. Pop-up browser windows simulating virus-scanning software will fool victims into either downloading a fake anti-virus program (at a substantial cost) or an actual virus that will open up whatever information is on the user's computer to scammers.

Email/Phishing Scams

A senior receives email messages that appear to be from a legitimate company or institution, asking them to "update" or "verify" their personal information. A senior receives emails that appear to be from the IRS about a tax refund.

Scam 7:

Investment Schemes

A number of investment schemes have been targeted at older people looking to safeguard their cash for their later years.

From pyramid schemes like Bernie Madoff's to fables of a Nigerian prince looking for a partner to claim inheritance money to complex financial products that many economists don't even understand, investment schemes have long been a successful way to take advantage of older people.

Scam 8:

Homeowner/Reverse Mortgage Scams

Scammers like to take advantage of the fact that many people above a certain age own their homes, a valuable asset that increases the potential dollar value of a certain scam.

A property tax scam in San Diego saw fraudsters sending personalized letters apparently on behalf of the County Assessor's Office. The letter, made to look official but displaying only public information, would identify the property's assessed value and offer the homeowner, for a fee of course, to arrange for a reassessment of the property's value and therefore the tax burden associated with it.

Closely related, the reverse mortgage scam has mushroomed in recent years. Unsecured reverse mortgages can lead property owners to lose their homes when the perpetrators offer money or a free house in exchange for the title to the property.

Scam 9:

Sweepstakes & Lottery Scams

Here, scammers inform their mark that they have won a lottery or sweepstakes of some kind and need to make some sort of payment to unlock the prize. Often, victims will be sent a check that they can deposit, knowing that while it shows up in their account immediately, it will take a few days before the (fake) check is rejected.

The criminals will quickly collect money for supposed fees or taxes on the prize, while the victim has the "prize money" removed from his or her account as soon as the check bounces.

Scam 10:

The Grandparent Scam

Scammers will place a call to an older person and say something along the lines of: "Hi Grandma, do you know who this is?" When the unsuspecting grandparent guesses the name of the grandchild the scammer most sounds like, the scammer has established a fake identity.

Once "in," the fake grandchild will usually ask for money to solve some unexpected financial problem (overdue rent, payment for car repairs, etc.), to be paid via Western Union or MoneyGram, which don't always require identification to collect.

The very fact that no research is needed makes this a scam that can be perpetrated over and over at very little cost to the scammer.

Tip 1:

Get yourself off unwanted mailing lists.

Use the “unsubscribe” or “opt out” links on spam email to have your name removed.

Contact these agencies to remove your name from consumer lists provided to businesses and telemarketers by credit reporting agencies:

Direct Marketing Association:

www.the-dma.org

DMA Mail Preference Service of
Direct Marketing Association
PO Box 643 Carmel, NY 10512
212.768.7277 #2

National Do Not Call List:

www.donotcall.gov

888.382.1222

Federal Trade Commission:

www.ftc.gov

Deceased Do Not Call Registration:

www.ims-dm/cgi/ddnc.php

Tip 2:

Get help.

If you think you’re being scammed, notify the local police. Check with your bank.

Contact these agencies right away:

State Department of Consumer Affairs

State Department of Adult Protective Services

Office of the Attorney General

We offer this information as a community service. Protecting your interests and well-being is a major part of our mission.