

Department of Family and Consumer Sciences

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF FROM COVID-19 SCAMS

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While we practice social distancing and self-isolation, scammers are working hard to take advantage of fears surrounding the new coronavirus. As we protect ourselves from the virus, we must also be vigilant and protect ourselves from scammers. Be cautious of phone calls, emails, texts or social media posts that may be selling fake products or information. Do your research before clicking on any links claiming to provide information on the virus; donating to a charity online or through social media; contributing to a crowdfunding campaign; or purchasing products online. Never give up your personal information in order to receive money or other benefits. To stay up to date on the latest information on scams, visit [ftc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.ftc.gov/coronavirus).

Warning Signs

Robocalls

Scammers are using illegal robocalls to pitch everything from scam coronavirus treatments to work-at-home schemes. Hang up on robocalls. Do not press any numbers.

Fake CDC Emails

Watch out for emails claiming to be from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) or other organizations claiming to offer information on the virus. Do not click links or open attachments you do not recognize. Instead, go directly to the CDC website at [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov). It is the best source for authoritative information on COVID-19.

Phishing Emails

Look out for phishing emails asking you to verify your personal information in order to receive an economic stimulus check from the government. Government agencies are not sending unsolicited emails seeking your private information in order to send you money. Phishing emails may also claim to be related to:



Protect Yourself from COVID-19 Scams

- Charitable contributions.
- General financial relief.
- Airline carrier refunds.
- Fake cures and vaccines.
- Fake testing kits.

Counterfeit Treatments or Equipment

Be cautious of anyone selling products that claim to prevent, treat, diagnose or cure COVID-19. Be alert to counterfeit products such as sanitizing products and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), including N95 respirator masks, goggles, full face shields, protective gowns and gloves. More information on unapproved or counterfeit PPE can be found at [cdc.gov/niosh](https://www.cdc.gov/niosh).

Tips to Avoid Being Scammed

Robocalls

- Hang up. Don't press any numbers. The recording might say that pressing a number will let you speak to a live operator or remove you from their call list, but it might lead to more robocalls, instead.
- Consider using a call blocking app or device. You also can ask your phone provider if it has call-blocking tools. To learn more, go to [ftc.gov/calls](https://www.ftc.gov/calls).
- Report the call. Report robocalls at [ftc.gov/complaint](https://www.ftc.gov/complaint).

Ignore online offers for vaccinations and home test kits. Scammers are trying to get you to buy products that aren't proven to treat or prevent COVID-19 — online or in stores. At this time, there also are no FDA-authorized home test kits for the coronavirus. Visit the FDA to learn more.

Fact-check information. Scammers, and sometimes well-meaning people, share information that hasn't been verified. Before you pass on any messages, contact trusted sources. Visit [usa.gov/coronavirus](https://www.usa.gov/coronavirus) for links to federal, state and local government agencies.

Know who you're buying from. Online sellers may claim to have in-demand products like cleaning, household, and health and medical supplies when, in fact, they don't.

Don't respond to texts and emails about checks from the government. The Internal Revenue Service already has your bank account information, so it will transfer the money to you via direct deposit based on the recent income tax figures it already has or send a paper check if that is how you normally receive your tax refund. A paper notice will also be sent in the mail no later than a few weeks after your payment has been disbursed. That notice will contain information about where the payment ended up and in what form it was made. If you haven't received the payment at that point, it would be time to contact the IRS using the information on the notice.

Don't click on links from sources you don't know. They could download viruses onto your computer or device.

Watch for emails claiming to be from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) or experts saying they have information about the virus. For the most up-to-date information about the coronavirus, visit the CDC at cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html and the World Health Organization (WHO) at who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019.

Do your homework when it comes to donations, whether through charities or crowdfunding sites. Don't let anyone rush you into making a donation. If someone wants donations in cash, by gift card, or by wiring money, don't do it.

Adapted by Barbara Metzger, MS from "Socially distancing from COVID-19 Robocall Scams," by Karen Hobbs, Assistant Director, Division of Consumer and Business Education, FTC; "Avoid Coronavirus Scams" ftc.gov; FBI public service announcement, "FBI Sees Rise In Fraud Schemes Related To The Coronavirus (Covid-19) Pandemic."



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