

Protecting Yourself from SCAMS



While it's important to be aware of the scams that senior citizens most often fall prey to, it's even more important to know how to prevent being a victim. Take the time to explain the possible scams to your loved ones, and suggest the following techniques to help them avoid potentially devastating thefts:

- **Be Suspicious.** If you or a loved one is generally trusting, being skeptical can be difficult. However, being generally suspicious of cold calls and unsolicited letters and emails that promise huge benefits is an effective way to stay protected.
- **Ask Questions and Get Information.** Before you or your loved one does business with a new company, obtain a name, address, phone number, and website for the person you're talking to. Just asking a few questions can be enough to scare some con artists away.
- **Become Familiar With Online Safety.** Surf only reputable websites, adjust email spam settings to the highest level, and never share personal information like Social Security numbers with *anyone* online – even if it seems as though your bank is requesting it. Call the bank first.
- **Never Give Personal Information Online.** An investment company or charity will *never* ask for a Social Security number via email. If you or your loved one receive an email requesting personal data, bank routing numbers, or other private information, it's probably a scam.



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- **Don't Make Hasty Decisions.** If a telemarketer pressures you to make an immediate decision, hang up the phone. Never make a decision to hand over money until you've had time to do careful research.
- **Check the BBB.** The Better Business Bureau is a fantastic tool for confirming the legitimacy of financial institutions, charities, and other organizations. Always check with the BBB before offering up funds. If a company isn't registered with the BBB, it could be fraudulent. A quick Internet search might also turn up information from people who have been scammed by a similar scheme.
- **Invest Carefully.** The most fool-proof investments are done with the assistance of a financial advisor, not a random acquaintance or someone who cold-calls your house. It takes only a few minutes to contact your bank or planner, and it could save hundreds or even thousands of dollars. Find a planner or counselor you can trust, and run all investment ideas by him or her first.
- **Don't Pay to Play.** *Never* provide money to gain a prize. When someone asks for a routing number to deposit funds, or for shipping and handling charges for a "free" prize, it's a clear sign that it's not legit.
- **Protect Others.** If you think you or a loved one has been the victim of a scam, contact your local police department to file a report. You can also let the FBI know about the scam artist by submitting your information to the FBI tips website.

