

## Fraud Surrounding COVID-19 is Increasing

As the number of people and communities affected by the COVID-19 pandemic grows, so do the scams associated with it. Scammers use public health emergencies as opportunities for new fraud schemes, and because older adults are at greater risk for serious illness from COVID-19, they may target older populations.

It's important to remember that although the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other public health officials may contact you if they believe you may have been exposed to the virus, they will not need to ask you for insurance or financial information.

Scammers rapidly alter their tactics and adapt their schemes to the changing landscape, and we anticipate that they will leverage the COVID-19 vaccine to prey on unsuspecting beneficiaries. Be vigilant and protect yourself from potential fraud concerning COVID-19 vaccines and treatments.

Here are things you need to know about the COVID-19 vaccine:

- You likely will not need to pay anything out-of-pocket to get the vaccine during this public health emergency.
- You cannot pay to put your name on a list to get the vaccine.
- You cannot pay to get early access to the vaccine.
- You will not be solicited door to door to receive the vaccine.
- No one from Medicare or the Health Department will contact you.
- No one from a vaccine distribution site or health care payer, like a private insurance company, will call you asking for your Medicare number, Social Security number, or your credit card or bank account information to sign you up to get the vaccine.

The Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) recommends that Medicare beneficiaries:

- Contact your own doctor if you are experiencing potential symptoms of COVID-19.
- Do not give out your Medicare number, Social Security number, or personal information in response to unsolicited calls, texts, emails, home visits, or booths at health fairs and other public venues. If your personal information is compromised, it may be used in other fraud schemes as well.
- Be suspicious of anyone going door-to-door to offer free coronavirus or COVID-19 testing, supplies, treatments, or vaccines.
- Carefully review your Medicare Summary Notice (MSN) or Explanation of Benefits (EOB), looking for errors or claims for products or services that weren't received.
- Follow the instructions of your state or local government for other actions you should be taking in response to COVID-19.
- Contact your local SMP for help. SMPs empower and assist Medicare beneficiaries, their families, and caregivers to prevent, detect, and report health care fraud, errors, and abuse.

The Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) is ready to provide you with the information you need to PROTECT yourself from Medicare fraud, errors, and abuse; DETECT potential fraud, errors, and abuse; and REPORT your concerns. SMPs help educate and empower Medicare beneficiaries in the fight against health care fraud. Your SMP can help you with your questions, concerns, or complaints about potential fraud and abuse issues. It also provides information and educational presentations. To locate your local Senior Medicare Patrol, call 1-877-808-2468 or visit [www.smpresource.org](http://www.smpresource.org).