

COVID-19 Vaccine Scams and Fraud Abuse



As COVID-19 vaccinations have started, unfortunately scam artists are taking advantage of people's desire to protect their health through vaccination. We want to make you aware of some of the schemes being used, and what to do if you come across one.

Scams and fraud abuse during COVID-19

Throughout the pandemic, criminals have been attempting to scam the public. While Medicare-aged individuals are frequently targeted, anyone is at risk of falling victim to a scam or fraud attempt. Typically, these criminals will impersonate official groups and reach out via telephone, email, or in-person. They request payment or even personal information, and in exchange may promise COVID-19 testing supplies, testing appointments, treatment options, or even information and news that they cannot deliver. With the ongoing phased distribution of vaccines, new scams have started to emerge.

Signs of a vaccines scam

You may be the target of a vaccines scam or fraud attempt if you are:

- Asked to pay out of pocket for a vaccine.
- Asked to put your name on an early access vaccines waiting list or pay for a vaccination appointment.
- Receiving communications from unknown sources advertising the availability of vaccines.
- Contacted by an unknown person online, on the phone, or at your door offering to sell or ship doses of the vaccines for payment.
- Receiving emails from unfamiliar senders asking you to click a link or enter personal information to access details about the vaccines.
- Being contacted by someone asking for personal or medical information to determine your vaccination eligibility.

How to report a scam or fraud abuse

If you think you may have been the target of a COVID-19-related scam or fraud attempt, please report it to the Office of Inspector General by going to tips.hhs.gov or by calling **800-447-8477**. You can also report the incident to your state's health department.

Protect yourself

Take caution when you come across vaccines advertisements and suspicious information. Only refer to official groups, such as your state's health department, for updates on vaccines availability and [distribution details](#). It's also important to only share personal and medical information with trusted healthcare professionals. Remember that vaccine doses purchased with U.S. taxpayer money will be offered at no cost, so anyone telling you that you must pay to be vaccinated is not legitimate. Learn about other [COVID-19 vaccines myths and facts](#) to stay well-informed.

Staying up to date on vaccines information and the [vaccines distribution plans](#) for your area will help you more easily spot a scam when you see one.

Source:

AARP website: COVID-19 Vaccines Scams a "Growing Problem" Amid Slow, Chaotic Rollout (January 2021): [aarp.org](https://www.aarp.org/health/2021/01/20/covid-19-vaccine-scams/).

HHS Office of Inspector General: Protect Yourself AVOID COVID-19 Vaccine Scams (accessed February 2021): oig.hhs.gov/coronavirus/vaccine-scams2020.pdf.

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