



6 coronavirus vaccine scams that target your money and personal information - and what to do about them!



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Finally, the [Covid-19 vaccine](#) is available to millions, including health care workers, chronically ill people and seniors. But with wider availability comes the inevitable spike in vaccine scams.

Fraudsters are promising early access to vaccines or even a personal shipment of vaccines -- at a cost, of course. But their offers aren't legit, and those they scam could end up with their personal information exposed and money stolen without ever getting the vaccine.

The following guidance on vaccine-related scams -- and how to avoid them -- comes from the FBI, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Better Business Bureau.

Bottom line: If you're sent communication about vaccines that seems fishy, check it out with your local health department. Don't give out personal information such as your bank account information or Social Security number when solicited by someone you don't know -- no health department or vaccination site would require that information to get you vaccinated. And you should only be vaccinated at authorized vaccination sites.

SCAM: You're asked to pay for your vaccine

You won't have to pay to receive the Covid-19 vaccine when it's your turn. If you're asked to pay or provide private information, that's not legit.

You should only receive a Covid-19 vaccine at authorized vaccination sites such as hospitals, pharmacies or mass vaccination hubs such as sports arenas. If you're not sure where to find your local vaccination site, you can [look them up by state](#) through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It's possible your vaccine provider will charge you an "administration fee" for giving you the shot. You can be reimbursed for this fee through your insurance or, if you're not insured, through the Health Resources and Services Administration's Provider Relief Fund, [per the CDC](#). If you can't afford the fee, though, you won't be turned away.

SCAM: You're offered early access for a fee

If you receive an offer to get your Covid-19 vaccine early for a fee, ignore it. No health department or vaccination site would vaccinate someone ahead of schedule if they paid for it.

The FBI warned of this scam in December 2020, and reports from the Better Business Bureau's Scam Tracker show that unknown scammers have sent unsolicited texts to random users, offering them access to the vaccine regardless of where in the vaccination schedule they fall.

SCAM: You're told to pay to put your name on a waiting list

As mentioned above, your local health department or vaccination site will not reach out to you and ask for payment to be put on a waiting list. Some vaccination sites in New York, Houston and Miami have created waiting lists -- mostly for seniors who are eligible to receive their vaccines now but haven't been able to get an appointment -- but those vary by location.

Some have had better luck showing up at vaccination sites toward the end of the day in search of leftover vaccines. But if sites do have extra vaccines that must be used within a few hours, you won't be asked to pay for them.

SCAM: You're asked to schedule appointments through unverified platforms

Unless you're certain your local health department is scheduling vaccine appointments on Eventbrite or similar platforms, you should avoid registering through sites unaffiliated with your health department or pharmacy.

Some counties are using Eventbrite to schedule vaccine appointments, but the ambiguity has made it easier for scammers to cash in. In one Florida county where health officials did not use Eventbrite, scammers made fake accounts and charged applicants to make vaccine appointments in the county anyway.

It's best to schedule an appointment through your health department or local pharmacy.

SCAM: You're told to pay to have the vaccine shipped to you

Vaccine distributors are not shipping doses of the vaccine to individuals, and you shouldn't administer the vaccine to yourself. You should only receive a vaccine at authorized vaccination sites, which you can find through your state health department or the CDC.

SCAM: You're made to take additional tests before you get a vaccine

You won't be made to take an antibody test or Covid-19 test before you receive your vaccine, so if you get texts, calls or emails that claim you should buy a test before you go, that's a scam. As reported by CNET and AARP, you don't need to undergo any additional medical tests before or during your vaccine appointment.

How to avoid getting scammed

Staying vigilant and informed is the best way to prevent scammers from accessing your money or private information.

It's best to reach out to your health care provider directly to get the facts, rather than solely interact with an unknown person through email or text. It's unlikely that a legitimate source would ask you to pay for a vaccine or visit a glitchy link.

If an unknown source asks for your Social Security number, bank account information or insurance ID, don't give it to them unless you've verified their identity with an official source, such as your health department or health care provider.

There are a few places where you can report vaccine scams:

- The Federal Trade Commissions' [ReportFraud.ftc.gov](https://www.ftc.gov/report-fraud), which shares information with law enforcement
- The FBI's tipline, at tips.fbi.gov or 1-800-CALL-FBI
- The HHS' Office of Inspector General, at tips.hhs.gov or 1-800-HHS-TIPS
- The Better Business Bureau's [Scam Tracker](https://www.bbb.org/scam-tracker)

