



Identity theft protection tips for seniors

Identity thieves are becoming savvier about who they target for fraud, and seniors often top the list, losing billions of dollars every year to scammers.

Many scams target senior citizens because they are more likely to have a nest egg, be trusting and polite with strangers, and less likely to report fraud, according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Plus, they may have little experience with computers, and be easily influenced by official-looking emails or direct threats accusing them of wrongdoing. Criminals exploit these traits.

Older adults can follow these tips to protect themselves against scams:

- Politely decline when a stranger calls on the phone or comes to your door with an unsolicited financial offer. Avoid giving information out over the phone when someone calls you asking for bank account data.
- Don't carry anything containing your Social Security number—a Medicare card, for example—in your wallet. Leave your checkbook at home, taking only the checks you'll need.
- Never make a spur-of-the-moment financial decision. Talk about financial offers with someone you trust.
- Be skeptical of offers that sound too good to be true—they probably are. Consider enrolling in the National Do Not Call Registry. Consumers can report telemarketers in violation to the Federal Trade Commission after they've been on the list for 31 days.
- Fraudsters and abusers prey on people who are isolated. Friends and families who want to help can become more involved in seniors' lives. Small things can make a difference, such as reviewing investment and banking records for unusual spending or signs of fraudulent activity.

Other standard identity theft protection safeguards also hold true for seniors. Shred sensitive data. Never share banking or credit card information from those requesting it online.

If you suspect you are a victim of identity theft or wish to proactively manage your identity, check with your insurance company, financial institution, or employee benefits provider. Many companies offer LifeStages® Identity Management Services from IDT911 for low or no cost. To learn more, visit idt911.com or call 1-888-682-5911.