

## Top 10 Scams Against Seniors

### Q: What are the most common scams aimed at seniors?

**A:** The National Council on Aging has created a list of the worst scams targeting seniors:

#### **1. Health Care/Medicare/Health Insurance Fraud:**

A scammer poses as a Medicare representative, and ask seniors to give out personal information; or they offer phony services at makeshift mobile clinics, then use the personal information to bill Medicare.

**2. Counterfeit Meds:** An internet scam which offers seniors “better prices” on specialized medications. The elder pays for something that won’t help their medical condition, and could be an unsafe substance that actually makes conditions worse. .

**3. Funeral & Cemetery Scams:** A complete stranger will call or attend a funeral service, claiming the deceased had an outstanding debt with them, and will ask relatives to pay money to settle the fake debts. Another scam is when a funeral home itself adds unnecessary charges to the bill—like insisting that an expensive casket is needed for a cremation, when an cardboard casket is all that is required.

**4. Bogus Anti-Aging Products:** Fake botox scams net millions of dollars, as renegade labs sell products containing botulism neurotoxin---one of the most toxic substances known to science. A bad batch can have serious health consequences.

**5. Telemarketing Fraud:** A con artist tells the senior that he/she has found a large sum of money and is willing to split it if the elder will make a “good faith” payment by withdrawing funds from his/her bank account. In another ploy, a con artist asks the elder to wire or send money to help the elder’s relative who is in the hospital and

needs the money. Phone calls are also used for charity scams, especially after natural disasters, to help charities that don’t exist,

**6. Internet Fraud:** Seniors are emailed a message to download a fake anti-virus program (at a substantial cost) that opens up whatever information is on the user’s computer to scammers. Or, seniors receive emails asking them to “update” or “verify” their personal information, or get fake notices from the IRS about a tax refund.

**7. Investment Schemes:** a number of investment schemes are sent to elders, offering complex financial products that many economists don’t even understand. If seniors have money to invest, they should only work with local advisors they trust and have worked with in the past.

**8. Reverse Mortgage Scams:** Unsecured reverse mortgages can lead property owners to lose their homes when the perpetrators offer money or a free house somewhere else in exchange for the title to the property.

**9. Sweepstakes & Lottery Scams:** Seniors are informed that they have won a lottery or sweepstakes of some kind but need to make some sort of payment to unlock the supposed prize. Scammers may send a “prize money” check that the elder can deposit in their bank account. It will take a few days for the fake check to bounce, and in the meantime, the criminals ask the senior to pay fees or taxes on the phony prize.

**10. The Grandparent Scam:** The elder gets a call saying: “Hi Grandma, do you know who this is?” When the elder guesses the name of the grandchild, the scammer uses that name to ask for money for overdue rent, or car repairs, to be wired by MoneyGram or Western Union.

