



U.S. Department of Health
and Human Services
U.S. Food and Drug Administration

Health Fraud Scams ...are Everywhere.

Get the Facts.

What are Health Fraud Scams?

Health fraud scams refer to products that claim to prevent, treat, or cure diseases or other health conditions, but are not proven safe and effective for those uses. Health fraud scams waste money and can lead to serious delays in getting the proper diagnosis and treatment, and can cause serious or even fatal injuries.



Common Types of Health Fraud Scams

- ▶ **Cancer, diabetes, and HIV/AIDS fraud:** These conditions require individualized treatments by a physician. Relying on unproven products or treatments can be dangerous, and may cause harmful delays in getting the proper diagnosis and appropriate treatments.
- ▶ **Arthritis remedies fraud:** Symptoms of arthritis tend to come and go so it's easy to fall prey to so-called "treatments", such as magnets, copper bracelets, chemicals, special diets, and electronic devices. Some of these products could be harmful, are expensive, and aren't likely to help.
- ▶ **Bogus dietary supplements:** Many supplements offer health benefits, but claims to treat or cure diseases are unproven and not allowed by law. Increasingly, so called "dietary supplements" are found to contain hidden illegal drugs and other chemicals that could cause serious harm. This is especially true for weight loss, sexual enhancement, and bodybuilding "supplements."
- ▶ **Weight loss scams:** Ads that promise "quick and easy" weight loss without diet or exercise are almost always false.
- ▶ **Anti-aging scams:** Despite claims about pills or treatments that lead to endless youth, no treatment has been proven to slow or reverse the aging process.
- ▶ **Diagnostic tests fraud:** Don't use "medical" tests that are not approved or cleared by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). They are often used to get you to buy products you don't need, and give inaccurate and/or useless results.
- ▶ **Influenza (flu) remedies fraud:** Though they may promise to help you avoid the latest flu or get well faster, there is little or no evidence to support these claims.
- ▶ **Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) fraud:** Drug or supplement products are not available over-the-counter (OTC) to prevent, treat, or cure STD's. They are available only by prescription. Use of bogus STD products may result in inaccurate diagnosis and delayed treatment, increasing the possibility of infecting a sexual partner.



Tip-Offs to Rip-Offs

By learning to recognize health fraud scams, you can help to avoid them.

Be suspicious of these red flag claims:

- 🚩 "Quick fix"
- 🚩 "All natural, miracle cure"
- 🚩 "One product does it all"
- 🚩 "New discovery" or "Scientific breakthrough"
- 🚩 "Secret ingredient"
- 🚩 "No more herpes"
- 🚩 "Shrinks tumors"
- 🚩 "Lowers blood sugar"
- 🚩 "Lose weight without diet or exercise"



Protect Your Information

Never give out personal information including your Medicare ID # in exchange for a free offer.

Don't Be a Victim of Health Fraud Scams

Health fraud scams are everywhere. You can find them on TV "infomercials," radio, and in magazines or newspapers.

Promotions for fraudulent health products are frequently found on the Internet, and you might even receive them in unsolicited emails. Fraudulent health products are also sold in stores and through mail-order catalogs.

Some companies even recruit your friends, family, or coworkers to spread the word about their products through word-of-mouth marketing.

Be wary of personal testimonials by "real people," or "doctors," played by actors claiming amazing results. Testimonials are not a substitute for scientific proof and can be a tip-off that it's a scam.

The bottom line is this, if it's an unproven or little known treatment, talk to your doctor or health care professional before using it. This is especially important if you are already taking prescription drugs.

When It Comes to Health Fraud Scams...

☑️ **BE SMART**

Scams often target those with chronic or incurable diseases. If it sounds too good to be true, it's probably a scam.

☑️ **BE AWARE**

Learn the most common types of health fraud scams and the red flag claims.

☑️ **BE CAREFUL**

If a product claims to cure a wide range of unrelated diseases, it's probably a scam. No one product can treat or cure many different illnesses.

How to Report a Problem

To report non-emergency problems with an FDA-regulated product, contact the consumer complaint coordinator in your geographic area. For a list of the coordinators and more information on reporting a problem visit: www.fda.gov/Safety/ReportaProblem, or call 1-888-463-6332.

To file a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission about misleading ads or websites for health products call 1-877-FTC-HELP (1-877-382-4357).

To learn more about identifying and avoiding health fraud scams visit:

FDA.GOV/HEALTHFRAUD



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
U.S. Food and Drug Administration
Office of Regulatory Affairs, Office of Enforcement