

Social Security Column

CORONAVIRUS-RELATED MEDICARE SCAM ALERT

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Since older Americans are particularly vulnerable to coronavirus (COVID-19), we want to remind Medicare beneficiaries to be vigilant and take precautions to avoid falling victim to healthcare fraud during this pandemic. We're warning Medicare beneficiaries that scammers may try to use this pandemic to steal their Medicare number, banking information, or other personal data.

Unfortunately, scammers take advantage of the most vulnerable people during times of uncertainty and change. You must protect yourself by making sure you *only* give your Medicare number to your doctor, pharmacist, hospital, health insurer, or other trusted healthcare provider.

If someone calls you on the phone, saying they're from Medicare, and asks for your Medicare number or other personal information – just hang up. Medicare representatives will never:

- Call beneficiaries to ask for or to “verify” Medicare numbers.
- Call to sell you anything.

- Promise you things if you give them a Medicare number.
- Visit you at your home.
- Call you to enroll you in a Medicare program over the phone, unless you called us first.

Medicare cards no longer have Social Security numbers on them to reduce fraud and protect beneficiaries from identity theft. Even with this change, you should guard your Medicare card like you would a credit card. Be sure to check your Medicare claim summaries for errors and questionable bills.

If you suspect Medicare fraud, please report it by calling Medicare's toll-free customer service center at 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227). You can also visit Medicare online at www.medicare.gov/forms-help-resources/help-fight-medicare-fraud.

Please help inform others by sharing this message with family and friends.

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