

Watch for scam artists

Be wary of texts citing a national quarantine or saying COVID-19 can be treated.

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There is nothing like a crisis to bring out con artists seeking to take advantage of the vulnerable and the unwary.

With the nation in the grip of the coronavirus pandemic, officials are warning of possible scams to bilk you out of money or steal your information.

Here are some things to keep in mind to protect yourself, according to law enforcement and health officials.

The federal government has not announced any plans to impose a national quarantine, so be wary of texts and social media posts claiming such an action is coming. U.S. officials are alleging that a foreign disinformation campaign is underway aimed at spreading fear in the country amid the coronavirus pandemic.

There are no vaccines, pills, potions, lotions, lozenges or other prescription or over-the-counter products available to prevent, treat, or cure COVID-19. The Federal Trade Commission and U.S. Food and Drug Administration have already sent warning letters to seven companies allegedly selling unapproved products that may violate federal law by making deceptive or scientifically unsupported claims about their ability to treat COVID-19.

Don't click on online sources you don't know or respond to emails from unfamiliar senders offering information or products related to the pandemic. They could be aimed at stealing your identity or downloading viruses to your computers or devices.

Be wary of emails claiming to be from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention or other health agencies saying they have information about the virus. For the most up-to-date information about the coronavirus, check the CDC and World Health Organization sites.

Vet any requests for donations. If don't know the charity or person requesting donations, don't give. Be particularly suspicious of crowdfunding sites that might crop up with the announced intention of supporting groups, such as restaurant workers, affected by closures related to the pandemic. Do not respond to requests for donations in cash, by gift card, or by wiring money.

You can sign up for consumer alerts about scams from the Federal Trade Commission or report suspicious claims to the agency at [ftc.gov/complaint](https://www.ftc.gov/complaint).