We've Got You Covered

Information is the Key to Avoiding Scams

Learn how to protect yourself from fraud, identity theft, and scams during National Consumer Protection Week, March 6 to 12. Every day, the Howard County Office of Consumer Protection (OCP) alerts residents to common scams in our community. "Chances are good that you know someone who has been scammed," says OCP Administrator Tracy Rezvani, "Sharing what you know can help protect others from becoming a victim."

Older adults are frequently targeted by sweepstakes and tech scams. Tech support scammers pretend to be calling from Microsoft®, Apple®, or other tech companies, or send pop-up messages warning about a problem with your computer. They want you to believe your computer is infected with a virus, or that a hacker is trying to access your computer. This is really a ploy to get you to give access to your computer or pay for bogus technical support. The companies behind sweepstakes scams send mailers that make people think they've won a large cash prize and that the recipient only needs to pay a small fee to claim it.

Be Alert to Other Scams

ROMANCE SCAMS have thrived during the pandemic as we have been isolated and excuses for why the love interest can't meet in person seem more acceptable.

IMPOSTERS can pose as the Social Security Administration, Medicare, the IRS, your bank, Amazon, IT support, sweepstakes, or a utility. These imposters either alert you to a breach, threaten some cutoff or arrest, or demand personal information or money.

ENERGY SCAMS include door-to-door sales that offer water testing, home energy audits, or claim to be from a utility offering to lower your rates. Ask for their peddler and solicitor license issued by OCP.

CHARITY SCAMS come in the form of non-existent charities or bogus PACs pretending to be charities. Check with the Secretary of State's office to make sure the charity is listed, and research them through Charity Navigator, Guidestar, Give.org or Charity Watch.

HOME REPAIR SCAMS escalate between spring and fall. Unlicensed home improvement contractors and landscapers show up at your door, especially after a storm, offering amazing prices for a deposit, and never return. Ask for their peddler and solicitor license issued by OCP.

GRANDPARENT SCAMS are when you are contacted by a criminal posing as a panicked grandchild in need of money quickly for an emergency, such as a hospital bill or bail money.

“One good rule of thumb is the 20-second-rule,” says Rezvani, “Spend at least that amount of time thinking about — or better yet discussing with someone you trust — whether the call, knock at the door, or email is legitimate.” For assistance with suspected fraud or scams, email consumer@howardcountymd.gov, or call 410-313-6420 or follow us on social media using @HoCoCommunity.

At the Office of Consumer Protection, we've got you covered!
March is National Nutrition Month®, and 2022 features a call to "Celebrate a World of Flavors." This year, make it your goal to eat a variety of foods from all food groups while incorporating your favorite cultural flavors and traditions, and trying some new ones!

If you need to cut back on sodium, experiment with herbs and spices from around the world to flavor your foods. Try sweeter spices like cinnamon, cardamom, allspice, nutmeg, or cloves for a flavorful twist the next time you are roasting potatoes, beets, carrots, or turnips. Paprika gives a smoky flavor to your favorite meats and veggies without added sodium. If you’re looking to spice things up, add red pepper flakes, chili powder, cayenne pepper, or dry mustard. For savory flavor, use dried oregano, rosemary, thyme, cumin, coriander, marjoram, or bay leaves to season pasta, veggies, rice, and seafood.

Salt-free blends made by Mrs. Dash® and McCormick’s® can help add flavor without added sodium, or you can make your own blend. Try this flavorful recipe to spice up your favorite meat, poultry, vegetable, and rice — it can be used on just about anything!

Salt-Free Seasoning Blend Recipe

1 tablespoon garlic powder
1½ teaspoons dried basil
1½ teaspoons dried parsley
1¼ teaspoons dried savory spice
1¼ teaspoons ground thyme
1 teaspoon ground mace
1 teaspoon onion powder
1 teaspoon ground black pepper
1 teaspoon dried sage
½ teaspoon cayenne pepper

Combine well and store in an airtight container.

Add Spices to Enhance Flavors!

By Carmen Roberts, MS, RD, LDN

Nutritionist, Howard County Office on Aging and Independence

AgeWell

In partnership with Howard County General Hospital, the Office on Aging and Independence (OAI) offers AgeWell two days/week for older adults. The program features basic aerobic moves to increase cardiovascular endurance and muscle stamina, helping participants build lean muscle mass and bone density through strength training. Classes conclude with a set of stretches to help you feel your best. Fee varies by location based on session dates. Individuals can register online, by phone, or at any 50+ Center.

Dementia Live

An interactive experience that immerses participants into life with dementia resulting in a deeper understanding of what it’s like to live with a cognitive impairment and sensory change.

2022 SCHEDULE

VIRTUAL AND IN-PERSON PROGRAMS

Monday, March 7 • 6:00 pm
VIRTUAL PROGRAM — REGISTRANTS WILL BE SENT LOG-IN DETAILS PRIOR TO EVENT

Monday, April 11 • 2:00 pm
VIRTUAL PROGRAM — REGISTRANTS WILL BE SENT LOG-IN DETAILS PRIOR TO EVENT

Wednesday, May 11 • 6:00 pm
IN PERSON EVENT TO BE HELD ON SITE AT
Howard County Office on Aging and Independence
9830 Patuxent Woods Drive, Columbia 21046

STAY INFORMED WITH DCRS!

Get the latest news from the Howard County Department of Community Resources and Services and the Office on Aging and Independence!

• Visit our website at www.howardcountymd.gov/aging
• Like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/HoCoCommunity

To attend, contact Karen Hull at 410-313-7466 (voice/relay) or email khull@howardcountymd.gov.