

## Scammers taking advantage of Coronavirus fears

The Bucks County Department of Consumer Protection wants residents to be aware of potential scams surrounding the Coronavirus. Consumers can expect to see a wide range of coronavirus-related scams over the coming weeks and months. These scams will prey on our fears about how and where the virus is spreading. Be aware of phishing scams such as fake government agency warnings about infections in your local area, vaccines and treatment offers, medical test results, health insurance cancellation, alerts about supply shortages, and many other inflammatory claims meant to illicit an immediate response out of fear.

The FTC and FDA have jointly issued warning letters to seven sellers of unapproved and misbranded products, claiming they can treat or prevent the Coronavirus. The companies' products include teas, essential oils, and colloidal silver. There are many immunity support type supplements on the market today however none should be making false claims that they can treat or prevent the Coronavirus.

The FTC says these companies have no evidence to back up their claims, which is required by law. The FDA says there are no approved vaccines, drugs or investigational products currently available to treat or prevent the virus.

### Avoiding Coronavirus Scams

Here are some tips to help you keep the scammers at bay:

- Beware that criminals use email, websites, phone calls, text messages, and even fax messages for their scams.
- Don't click on links from sources you don't know in a text message or e-mail. These links could download viruses or malware onto your computer or device.
- Ignore online offers for vaccinations. There currently are no vaccines, pills, potions, lotions, lozenges or other prescription or over-the-counter products available to treat or cure Coronavirus disease.
- Do your homework when it comes to charitable donations, whether through charities or crowdfunding sites. Don't let anyone rush you into making a donation. If someone wants donations in cash, by gift card, or by wiring money, don't do it.
- Watch for emails or texts claiming to be from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) or experts saying they have important information about the virus. Scammers may send phishing links in these fraudulent messages. For the most up-to-date information about the Coronavirus, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO) websites directly. These websites are easy to remember and have direct links for information on their main pages; [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) and [www.who.int](http://www.who.int)
- There is also helpful information about Coronavirus on the Pennsylvania State Department of Health website. [www.health.pa.gov](http://www.health.pa.gov)
- The Bucks County Department of Health asks for your cooperation in going to the CDC or State websites for answers to your questions and concerns instead of calling their department. This will allow their staff to receive updates and answer calls coming from the State DOH, doctor's offices, hospitals and other healthcare providers regarding this disease outbreak. Coronavirus is a rapidly evolving situation that the Bucks County Department of Health is monitoring with local, state & federal agencies.