**Beware of ‘Free Genetic Testing’ Medicare Scam**

Over the past few years, DNA tests have become more popular across the country. However, unscrupulous people are taking advantage of the buzz around these tests to scam Medicare beneficiaries.

Scammers target Medicare beneficiaries through telemarketing calls, booths at public events, health fairs and door-to-door visits. They offer “free” genetic testing to help recipients avoid diseases or find the right medications.

The scammers claim the testing is covered by Medicare, and therefore is free to the beneficiary. In reality, Medicare only covers genetic testing in limited situations, and only when ordered by the beneficiary’s physician. If a company bills Medicare for genetic testing, and Medicare denies the claim, the beneficiary could be responsible for the entire cost of the test, which can total around $10,000.

In other cases, the scammers are simply trying to obtain Medicare numbers they can use to steal a beneficiary’s medical identity or to fraudulently bill Medicare for services they did not provide. Such fraud can hurt not just Medicare beneficiaries, but all American taxpayers who contribute to Medicare.

To avoid being scammed, the Administration for Community Living (ACL) offers this advice to beneficiaries:

* Do not accept genetic testing services, including a cheek swab, from someone at a community event, local fair, farmer’s market, parking lot or other large event.
* Always be cautious about giving out your personal information, including your Medicare number.
* If you receive a genetic testing kit in the mail, don’t accept it unless it was ordered by your physician. Refuse the delivery or return it to the sender and keep a record of the sender’s name and the date you returned the item.
* Always review your Medicare Summary Notice or explanation of benefits. The terms “gene analysis” or “molecular pathology” may indicate questionable genetic testing.

If you received a cheek swab or screening that was not ordered by a trusted provider or have concerns about billing errors or possible fraud, contact your local Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP). The SMP program, funded by ACL, helps Medicare beneficiaries protect themselves from fraud, errors and abuse, and detect and report problems if and when they occur. To find your local SMP, visit [smpresource.org](https://betah.sharepoint.com/sites/ACL/Shared%20Documents/2%29%20Media%20%26%20Release%20Support/Family%20Features/smpresource.org/) or call 1-877-808-2468.