

# Wisconsin Senior Medical Patrol Fraud Alert



January 2022

*Senior Medicare Patrols (SMPs) empower and assist Medicare beneficiaries, their families, and caregivers to prevent, detect, and report health care fraud, errors, and abuse through outreach, counseling, and education.*

Please feel free to share this publication with others who may benefit from its contents.

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## Scammers Targeting Covid Testing Options

Our country continues to be subjected to the restraining influence of the Covid pandemic. Despite our fatigue, we need to be vigilant to ward off the disease. And the recent surge of Omicron cases reminds us to be cautious, to protect our health, and the wellbeing of others around us.

A recent development in limiting transmission is the increase in access to testing. There are four approaches to testing:

- Order test kits to be delivered to your home
- Purchase test kits and obtain reimbursement from your private insurance company
- Go to a Covid testing site
- Go to your doctor's office for testing

The government is making it easier to test for Covid. Unfortunately, so are the scammers. They are once again taking advantage of the Covid predicament by selling illegitimate test kits and setting up unscrupulous, even fraudulent, testing locations. These fraudsters work really hard to sell you useless and misleading tests and to steal your identity at the same time. Everyone is a target.

It is critical that you be aware of the potential for fraud and be able to find legitimate testing kits and locations. Here are some tips.

- ❖ To receive free testing kits sent right to your home, go to [covidtests.gov](https://covidtests.gov). For those who may have difficulty accessing the internet or need additional help to place their orders, call 1-800-232-0233. Each address that orders will receive four kits. If you live at an address with multiple dwellings, be sure to **put your apartment or condo number in the street address line** (*not* in the apartment/suite/other box). Failure to do so will result in a message that your address has already ordered kits.

Funded by: This project was supported, in part by grant number 90MPPG0041-01-00, from the U.S. Administration for Community Living, Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, D.C. 20201. Grantees undertaking projects under government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their findings and conclusions. Points of view or opinions do not, therefore, necessarily represent official Administration for Community Living policy.



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- ❖ You can also purchase home test kits at area pharmacies. Your private insurance company is required to reimburse your expense. Some insurance companies will make tests available to their members through other means. Be sure to check with your insurance provider about how and where to get your free test kits *before* you buy them. **Special note: if you are on Original Medicare, Medicare will not cover or reimburse you for a home test kit.** Your best approach is to request test kits from the website [covidtests.gov](https://www.covidtests.gov).
- ❖ Testing sites are popping up in most communities. Please check with your local Health Department as to which locations are authorized. You can also go to [covidtests.gov](https://www.covidtests.gov) to find various locations. Scroll down and you'll see a listing of pharmacies. In addition to the pharmacies listed, you can scroll just a bit further to **Health Centers** and click on "Find a Health Center Near You".
- ❖ Get vaccinated and boosted! Vaccines are the best way to prevent getting Covid and to minimize the effects of the illness should you get infected. They are widely available. To find a location to get a vaccination or a booster, go to: [Vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov) or call: 1-800-232-0233 for assistance.

## **Red Flags / Don't accept:**

- Someone calling or coming to your door selling kits, or handing them out, in exchange for your Medicare number.
- A testing site that asks for a Social Security Number, a credit card, bank account information, or payment of any kind -- that is likely fraud.
- A pop-up, walk-in, no-appointment-needed site that is not associated with the Health Department. It is recommended that people should seek testing through their health care provider or testing sites that are operated by a city/county/state or public health department.

Vaccines, boosters, and improved testing options are offering us increased opportunities to socially engage with others and to venture into our communities. You can substantially reduce your risk of becoming ill or transmitting covid to others with these common-sense preventive measures and you can guard against fraud by steering clear of the fraudsters who are only too eager to help themselves to your money and your identity.

Please contact Senior Medicare Patrol if you or a family member has questions or concerns about fraud or abuse surrounding covid. Also, if you feel that you have unwittingly given out your Medicare number, we can talk with you about some steps you can take. We can be reached through our toll-free Helpline, 888-818-2611 or through our website, [www.smpwi.org](https://www.smpwi.org).  
All calls are confidential.



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