

BBB: Warns of phony COVID-19 testing sites

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Milwaukee, Wis. – This winter's spike in COVID-19 cases has more people than ever looking for tests. This has given rise to a new con: **phony websites and suspicious in-person testing sites used to collect personal and insurance information.**

How the scam works

Several websites appear after an online search for a COVID-19 testing site in your area, and a testing clinic affiliated with a local pharmacy or a pop-up run by a local group is selected.

In one version of this scam, you arrive at the testing site and are asked to complete a form with personal information, your driver's license, and medical insurance cards are photographed. Then, a swab is done and a promise is made that test results will arrive within a short time. Unfortunately, the test is fake and the results never arrive. It was an excuse to get your information.

In another version of this con, you complete an online appointment form with personal, insurance, and medical information. In some cases, a small fee is paid. But, on the day of the appointment, the pharmacy has no record of your reservation. Again, the phony form was a way of phishing for personal information.

One victim reported to BBB Scam Tracker this experience at a phony testing site: "Not until I got home did I realize I provided WAY too much personal information... They used a swab of saliva and said I would be notified by email within 24 hours. It has now been 2 weeks no results, and they are still there doing covid tests."

How to avoid COVID-19 testing scams

- **Understand the COVID-19 testing options in your area.** The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reminds consumers that no-cost COVID-19 tests are available to everyone in the U.S. at health centers and select pharmacies. If someone insists you pay for a test, especially if they claim it will cost you hundreds of dollars, it's a scam.
- **Only get tested at authorized testing sites or health centers.** Visit your state, tribal, local, or territorial health department's website to find an authorized testing site in your area. In Canada, get information about testing for your province and see more resources for Canadians from BBB.
- **Watch out for lookalike websites.** Scammers have become adept at creating websites that look just like websites belonging to well-known, trusted businesses. Before entering your personal information into an online form, make sure the website you are visiting is secure and there are no misspellings or unfamiliar names in the URL bar.
- **Be wary of unsolicited callers and messages.** No legitimate company or health clinic will call, text, or email you without your permission. If you get an unsolicited message from someone, it's best not to give the caller or sender any personal details before confirming it's from a legitimate source.
- **Read the fine print on any documentation you are asked to sign.** Question where the personal information is being kept as well as if it is secure, what lab is processing the results, and read the agreement carefully before signing. If anything within the agreement does not seem right, leave and find another testing facility.

For more information

Read about other popular COVID-19 scams and additional testing scams. It may also be helpful to learn about other ways scammers are taking advantage of the pandemic with vaccine scams, clinical trial scams, contract tracing cons, counterfeit face masks, and government agency impostors.

If you've spotted a scam, report it to BBB Scam Tracker, even if you didn't fall victim or lose any money. Your report can help others avoid common scam tactics.

For more information or further inquiries, contact the Wisconsin BBB at www.bbb.org/wisconsin, 414-847-6000 or 1-800-273-1002. Consumers also can find more information about how to protect themselves from scams by following the Wisconsin BBB on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube.

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