



DATCP, DHS Share Tips to Help Wisconsinites Avoid Vaccine Trial Imposter Scams

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MADISON – Researchers are recruiting participants for COVID-19 vaccine research in Wisconsin, and scammers are beginning to take advantage. If you are considering participating in a vaccine trial, make sure you know how to distinguish legitimate studies from imposters. Use these tips from the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP), and the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) to avoid becoming a victim of an imposter scam.

Verify the research study. Clinical trials are big news; you should be able to find news stories online for legitimate trials on COVID-19 vaccines in your area by looking at local news sites. If you see an advertisement for a study, do an online search with the provided information and the terms “news,” “scam,” or “review” to check whether the study is legitimate. Do not click on links in emails, messages, or pop-up advertisements. Instead, use a verified website for the study host to ensure that you are not providing information to a scammer.

If you are interested in volunteering for a research study, the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) runs a [COVID-19 Prevention Network](#) site with a volunteer screening database that can match you to a current or future study. Alternatively, you can verify information on a wide range of clinical studies, including if they are currently recruiting participants, and official contact information, by searching the free searchable database maintained by NIH and the National Library of Medicine at [ClinicalTrials.Gov](#).

Understand what personal information the study may need. Screening questions for volunteers will likely include information such as your name, phone number, email, address, age, gender, race, ethnicity, and medical history. However, legitimate clinical trials should not ask for your Social Security number or financial account numbers.

Never pay to participate. Many legitimate vaccine studies may offer compensation for participation in the study. However, legitimate studies will not ask for payment or credit card information. If you are compensated for participation in a legitimate study, you can further protect your financial information by asking for your payment as a check rather than direct deposit.

If you have been a victim of an imposter scam, related to COVID-19 or otherwise, file a consumer complaint with DATCP. Consumers can file a complaint online at datcp.wi.gov, by calling the Consumer Protection Hotline at (800) 422-7128, or by emailing DATCPHotline@wisconsin.gov.

For additional information and consumer protection resources, visit DATCP’s Consumer Protection Bureau at datcp.wi.gov. For information and updates on COVID-19 in Wisconsin, visit dhs.wisconsin.gov.

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