

Protecting seniors from scammers

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(HealthDay)—It seems as though every day brings warnings about phone and internet scammers, with older Americans being particularly vulnerable.

The Federal Trade Commission estimates that 7.3 percent of adults between the ages of 65 and 74, and 6.5 percent of those aged 75 and older, are victims of financial fraud to the tune of billions of dollars. If you're looking after aging parents, these tips will help you watch out for their financial health.

Scammers often aim to evoke strong emotions in their targets to persuade them to part with their money. The Center on Longevity at Stanford University designed an experiment to simulate some of the tactics used with fraudulent scams.

Researchers induced three types of emotional arousal in [study participants](#), then gauged their responses to deliberately misleading ads. They found that when [older adults](#) experienced "high-arousal" emotions, such as excitement or anger, they were more likely than [young people](#) to show interest in enticing schemes and make risky decisions than when they experienced "low-arousal" emotions, like being tired, bored or depressed.

Talk with your parents to explain tactics a fraudster might use to manipulate them, such as getting them overly excited and putting pressure on them to make a decision fast. Suggest that a great rule of thumb for people of all ages is to wait at least a day before acting on any offering.

Young and old alike can take steps to avoid fraud. Never give [personal information](#) to strangers who are trying to sell you something; ask to see credentials and speak to supervisors; and do a background check, even on supposed charities and financial advisers, to make sure they are legitimate.

More information: The FBI has detailed information on [fraud schemes](#) and advice for the elderly.

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