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## Beware of these scams aimed at seniors

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According to recent news reports, seniors in Canada get bilked out of as much as \$300 million every year. It is estimated that as many as one in five seniors have lost money to fraudsters and most don't report it.

Even though seniors today may be mentally sharper than ever, they are still the con artists' favorite target because they generally have more disposable cash and are often more trusting. Also, with our population living longer, there are more elders in their 80's and 90's who are vulnerable because they live alone, have a certain level of memory loss and can be confused or frightened by slick scammers.

Scam artists try their tricks on all age groups, but some of their cons they focus on seniors. Just a few to be wary of are:

**Grandchild-in-trouble** - Henry gets a call from what sounds like a grandson asking for some urgent financial help. Apparently traveling far from home, he needs bail money or emergency car repairs and asks for a wire transfer.

In a nasty new twist, crooks knew some things about the grandchild and used an accomplice to impersonate their voice. They were told their grandchild had been kidnapped and demanded payment of ransom. Cunningly, the crooks earlier called the grandchild on their cell phone, impersonating the phone carrier, and asked them to turn it off for a maintenance check.

- **Protection** - Wire payment is the dead give-away. Never send money before confirming the grandchild's whereabouts and call police.
- **Phony bank official** - Anne was bilked out of more than \$15,000 in March 2008 when she thought she was helping her bank catch a thieving teller. She was instructed to withdraw a large sum of cash from her account and deliver it to the 'bank official' at a mall in her neighborhood. He was well dressed and assured her that the funds would be deposited back to her account. Anne was told not to tell her bank because they didn't want to tip-off the teller, and he was able to get her to make two more withdrawals.
- **Protection** - Do not give any personal information to someone claiming they represent your bank. Call the police.
- **Scareware** - Shortly after David and Gail got their first computer, a message appeared on their screen telling them it was infected with a virus. They were invited to download a program for a small charge, giving the fraud artist their credit card information.
- **Protection** - First thing, have Internet security software from one of the big-name providers installed. Set it to update regularly and ignore the phony pop-up messages.

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