

Karima M. Woods, Commissioner

DISB CONSUMER ALERT

Beware of Weight Loss Scams

The District of Columbia Department of Insurance, Securities and Banking (DISB) cautions residents to be on guard against weight loss scams.

HOW IS THE SCAM PERPETRATED?

Scammers are using telemarketing calls, text messages, social media platforms, blogs, fake news websites and banner ads to lure consumers into purchasing seemingly miraculous weight loss products.

Summer is right around the corner and it has been months since many of us have made resolutions to lose weight. Perhaps the desire to lose weight was for health reasons, to look better or to buy a new wardrobe. There are healthy, effective weight loss programs that have been shown to help people successfully lose weight. Consult your physician, registered dietician, or nutritionist to determine which program best suits you. However, some unscrupulous companies falsely advertise weight loss products and services with phony claims. Knowing which claims are true or false often relies on good judgement.

WAYS TO AVOID WEIGHT LOSS SCAMS

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has identified typical false promises you will see in weight loss ads:

- You can lose weight without dieting or exercising.
- You don't have to watch what you eat to lose weight.
- To lose weight, all you have to do is take a certain pill.
- You can lose 30 pounds in 30 days.
- You can lose weight with a particular patch or cream.

Now for the truth:

- Any promise of miraculous weight loss is simply untrue.
- There's no magic way to lose weight without a sensible diet and regular exercise.
- No product will let you eat all the food you want and still lose weight.
- FDA-approved fat-absorption blockers or appetite suppressants won't result in weight loss on their own. Those products need to be taken with a low-calorie, low-fat diet and regular exercise.
- Products promising lightning-fast weight loss are always a scam. Worse, they can ruin your health.
- Nothing you can wear or apply to your skin will cause you to lose weight.

The FTC also warns consumers to be on the lookout for so-called free trial offers of dietary supplements. Many people who have signed up for these free trials have ended up paying a lot of money and have been billed for recurring shipments they did not want. Additionally, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has discovered hundreds of dietary supplements that promote weight loss that contained potentially harmful drugs or other chemicals not listed on the product label.

REPORT FRAUD

If you believe you have been the victim of a weight loss scam or other financial fraud, file a report with the FTC at reportfraud.ftc.gov or call the FTC Consumer Response Center at 877-382-4357. You may also contact the DISB Enforcement and Consumer Protection Division at 202-727-8000.

About DISB

The mission of the [Department of Insurance, Securities, and Banking \(DISB\)](#) is three-fold: (1) cultivate a regulatory environment that protects consumers and attracts and retains financial services firms to the District; (2) empower and educate residents on financial matters; and (3) provide financing for District small businesses.

Social Media

DISB Twitter: [@DCDISB](#)

DISB Facebook: facebook.com/DISBDC