

TRICK, DON'T TREAT, CYBER CRIMINALS

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Kids and kids at heart look forward to the end of October, when we use tricks and treats in equal measure to celebrate Halloween. No doubt, you'll be passing out treats to costumed hobgoblins and hooligans in your neighborhood this Halloween night. But be careful that you're not fooled by a different kind of trickster looking for a larger handout—such as your identity.

October also is Crime Prevention Month and National Cyber Security Awareness Month. So it is the perfect time to remind you to safeguard your personal information—whether it's online, on paper, or given out in person. Don't share your personal information, such as your full name, date of birth, mother's maiden name, and your Social Security number, with anyone unless you are certain it is safe. Shred paperwork that includes personal information before throwing it out. And never reply to emails claiming to be from Social Security and asking for such information. Finally, don't carry your Social Security card or number with you. These tips should help reduce your risk of identity theft.

Identity theft is one of the fastest-growing crimes in America. If you think you've been the victim of an identity thief, you should contact the Federal Trade Commission at www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/microsites/idtheft. Or you can call 1-877-IDTHEFT (1-877-438-4338); TTY 1-866-653-4261.

Learn more about identity theft by reading our publication, *Identity Theft And Your Social Security Number*, available at www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs.

Be cautious of tricksters trying to steal more than a sack of candy. Being the victim of identity theft can be horrifying. Enjoy the treats, but avoid the tricks.

