

Staying Safe Doesn't Get Any Easier

DNA Scams – So you'd like to know who you *really* are. Are you Lithuanian or are you a Nubian prince, or princess? So you contact a firm, e.g. 23andMe or Ancestry.com to find out, swab your cheek, and send it on its way. It gets analyzed and you get a report. What could go wrong? Well, lots actually. It's nice to know that one's 90% Irish, a little Spanish and a bit Russian, slightly disappointed at not being just a wee bit Bedouin. This the author knows because, while he didn't request that his DNA be tested, one of his siblings did. Now that's important because others may be inadvertently sharing your personal data without your knowledge. And that's rarely good. This is one of those areas where a *personal* decision can, and often does, have an effect on others, specifically on one's family.

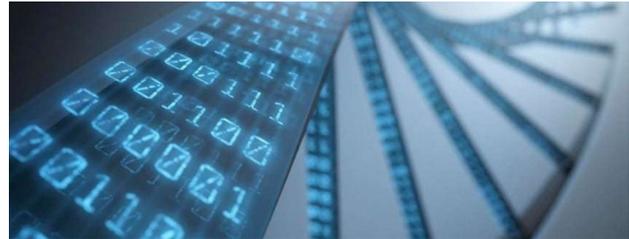
So, what can scammers do with this? - Plenty. They concoct scenarios involving long lost siblings, cousins or even offspring. Social media, phone calls, emails, etc. are then used to orchestrate a classic *spear phishing* attack designed to separate you from your money, causing a lot of emotional distress along the way. Other scenarios include "helping" you deal with "medical issues" that your DNA profile indicates you never knew you had. The more information in the hands of those without souls, the more effective they will be. And with your DNA information, they have a lot.

Dealing with reputable DNA testing firms should keep you safe, right? Probably not. Your data is not safe since a data breach of their facilities has a direct impact on you. And it has already happened. It is prudent to assume that your DNA information is already on the dark web, available for sale. Or already purchased?

And once scammers have this information, it becomes impossible to secure. Unlike financial data, you can't put a "freeze" on it. You don't get to ask for a new set of data. This is you. And this DNA data, combined with all of the other information already acquired by the bad guys,

paints a pretty comprehensive picture of who you are and the best way to attack you.

Other DNA Scams include "Free" or "Discounted DNA Testing" offers, ostensibly from legitimate companies. Clicking on the link brings you **not** to "Ancestry.com" or "23andme" but in reality a look alike site that is the heart of a traditional *phishing* attack. And the site will likely look perfect. Once you've filled in the *required personal information*, life becomes more difficult.



Of course DNA gathering and storage has also proven to be a real benefit to society. Crimes have been solved by matching DNA samples. Doctors now use DNA to understand an individual's genetic makeup to provide tailored treatments and preventative measures. DNA gathering has also proven useful in the development of life saving drugs.

There's also discussion regarding the potential for unethical use by some, e.g. insurance companies, perhaps to deny you coverage for some health risk that might surface based on your DNA profile. But that's another story altogether.

All are encouraged to learn more about this subject. There's a lot of information on the web and elsewhere.

And remember, as always. **Don't talk to strangers!**