

NEWS You Can Use

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Prevent Cyber-Shopping Scams This Holiday

Online shopping is convenient and offers savings, but beware: scammers are upping their game.

Fake shopping sites, direct texts, email and phone calls provide opportunities for thieves to steal your money or your personal information, and be alert for tax-related scams as well.

Only shop site URLs that begin with “https” – the “s” is for secure communications. Look for the padlock icon in the browser window.

Never shop with public Wi-Fi.

Keep up to date security software on your devices with malware protection.

Use strong, unique passwords for online accounts.

Use multi-factor authentication whenever possible.



Don't be a victim this holiday season. Take the proper steps to protect yourself:

forbes.com/sites/johnwasik/2023/12/01/6-ways-to-prevent-cyber-shopping-scams-this-holiday-season

Health Benefits of Ginger

Ginger is best known for anti- nausea effects, but is also used to ease common ailments from colds and flu to motion sickness and digestive woes.

Ginger improves cold and flu symptoms by stimulating perspiration and warming the body from the inside. It also helps keep the respiratory tract moist and relieves nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea.



One of the easiest ways to reap these benefits is to drink ginger tea. Look for it in your health food or grocery store or brew your own: simply slice a two-inch piece of fresh ginger, add to four cups of water, bring to a boil, and simmer for 15–20 minutes.

To avoid motion sickness, try eating a 1/4 inch slice of ginger, or take 1,000 mg of standardized ginger extract three or four hours before travel.

Ginger extract has also been shown to be as effective as conventional analgesics in relieving arthritis pain.

<http://www.drwhitaker.com/health-benefits-of-traditional-holiday-favorites-did-you-know/>

The Fed is Keeping its Options Open This December

U.S. central bank policymakers are weighing conflicting economic signals: inflation is still a concern, but credit over-dampening can also damage the economy.



Bond yields, specifically on the 10-year Treasury note, influence interest rates on credit cards, mortgages and car loans. When bond yield rates and Fed interest rates go up, borrowing money becomes more expensive.

Fed Chair Jerome Powell's statements at November's post-meeting press conference suggest the higher Treasury yields are doing the intended work of tightening, and that if yields remain elevated the Fed could afford to skip more rate

hikes at future meetings, as they did in November. There have been four rate increases so far in 2023, occurring at the February, March, May, and July FOMC meetings.

While the Fed signaled that it could raise rates once more

this year to bring inflation down to the 2% target, Fed Chair Powell has stated that the decision made during the December meeting will depend on the data that comes in.

<https://www.reuters.com/markets/us/fed-minutes-likely-anchor-careful-approach-policy-2023-11-21>

<https://www.cnn.com/2023/11/12/economy/powell-bond-yields-rate-hike/index.html>

Christmas Trivia



The first artificial Christmas Tree wasn't a tree at all - The first artificial Christmas trees were developed out of goose feathers that were dyed green in Germany in the 19th century. They became more popular in the early 20th century, catching on in the US.¹

Days Off From Work – Currently, Christmas Day and the time surrounding it is a day off for many, if not most, working folks, but that wasn't always true! Even in 1850 in the New England states, Christmas wasn't yet a legal holiday, and businesses were open and kids went to school.²

Scrooge does not celebrate with the Cratchits. - Most cinema versions of "A Christmas Carol" show Scrooge celebrating with his employee. In the book, he celebrates with his nephew.²

1- pastbook.com/txt/12-fun-christmas-facts
2 - inc.com/geoffrey-james/10-weird-facts-about-christmas.html

Year End Bond Swaps

Year end is a prime time to consider bond swaps (or tax swaps), in which certain bonds are sold at a loss and replaced with others.

Investors usually arrange year-end tax swaps with one or more of the following goals in mind: greater tax efficiency, better portfolio diversification, or a better rate of return. An astute series of bond (or stock) swaps might achieve one, two, or three of those objectives.

Bond swaps involve selling one bond and using the proceeds from the sale to buy a similar bond. The capital loss can be taken to counter a capital gain elsewhere.

Some things to keep in mind: Swaps only make sense for investments held within taxable accounts. Under the wash sale rule, debt securities involved in a swap must not be substantially identical within 30 days before or after the sale.

Every year, investors sell underperforming shares in their stock portfolios and take either short-term or long-term capital losses. Commonly called **tax-loss harvesting**, the wash sale rule described above applies.

During an environment of Fed rate hikes, interest rates are rising, breaking correlations that formed in an era of cheap money.

Target shares currently worth less than their cost basis: that is, what you paid for them, plus any commissions you paid, plus the reinvested dividend and capital gains distributions.

morningstar.com/articles/889941/taxloss-selling-a-silver-lining-in-volatile-market.html



It Happened In ...



December 1st 1919 –

Lady Nancy Astor became the first woman in the British House of Commons.

December 6th 1865 –

The 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was ratified, abolishing slavery.

December 15th 1995 –

European Union leaders announced their new currency would be known as the Euro.

December 21st 1846 –

Anesthesia was used for the first time in Britain at University College Hospital in London by Robert Liston during a leg amputation.

December 27th 1945 –

The International Monetary Fund was established in Washington, D.C.

December 31st 1879 –

Thomas Edison provided the first public demonstration of his electric incandescent lamp at his laboratory in Menlo Park, New Jersey.

www.historyplace.com/specials/calendar/december.htm

How Patients can Cut the Waste From Their Medical Bills

Our health system wastes money on unnecessary testing and procedures, often shifting costs to consumers. But there are ways patients can protect themselves.

Here are seven steps patients can take to protect themselves:

1. Make sure the proposed test or treatment is necessary.

Ask what might happen if you didn't get the service right now.

2. Ask the price before the test or treatment.

Prices may be negotiable if they are not set by a contract with your insurance company.

3. Write on your financial agreement that you agree to pay for all treatment provided by providers who are in-network, which means they have set rates with your insurance company. (The medical providers may not accept the altered form.)

4. Get the billing codes the medical provider will use to charge you and contact your

insurance provider to make sure that each code is covered.

5. If you decide to have a procedure, see if you can get the National Provider Identifier and/or Tax ID number of the surgeons, anesthesiologists and their assistants. Contact your insurance company to see if the providers are in-network, which results in the negotiated rates.



6. Request an itemized bill, and then look at each specific charge. Medical bills are often riddled with errors.

7. Ask if the provider has a financial assistance policy, which could result in a sliding scale discount. Many people qualify, and discounts can range from 20 to 70 percent.

<https://www.propublica.org/article/seven-ways-patients-can-protect-themselves-from-outrageous-medical-bills>