

Tech Tips for Seniors

Privacy and TV Sets

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Recent news articles have created fear that the TV sets in our homes may be spying on us.

You may have read or heard that cameras and microphones are built into some “smart” TV sets. That is true, but not every TV includes those features.

The only way cameras and microphones might “spy” on us is through a connection between a TV set and the Internet.

That connection is done with the help of the same Wi-Fi browser used by computers and cell phones to receive and send information such as

E-mails and web searches. Companies such as Comcast and Verizon provide those browsers to subscribers, often for a fee.

One sure-fire way to make sure what happens or is said in your home stays in your home is NOT to connect your TV set to your Wi-Fi browser.

There is downside of disabling the Wi-Fi connection in your TV set, however. Without a Wi-Fi connection to your TV set, you won't be able to view content offered by providers such as Netflix and Disney+ or to "cut the cord" to a cable-TV provider.

So you can know what your risk may be, the FBI suggests doing a basic Google search on your TV model and its features, using words like "microphone," "camera" and "privacy."

Here's what the FBI recommends:

- Know how to turn off any microphones and cameras built into your TV set.
- Turn off in your TV's settings the ability of your set to collect personal information such as the types of programs you watch. Companies use that information to decide which TV shows to advertise on.
- If you can't or don't want to turn those settings off, consider whether you are willing to take the risk of buying that model or using that service.

When you set up that new TV you may have bought recently, it is unwise to answer any personal questions in the set-up menu screens.

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If you have questions about any of this, feel free to make a "Technology Tips" appointment

on Tuesday mornings at Generations, when the center opens. Just call the main number: 215-723-5841.

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