

Tips for Finding Credible Health Information on the Internet

With the enormous amount of information on the internet, how do you know what you can trust? Many sites may seem helpful and informative but can be inaccurate and misleading. Here are some tips to help you sort through the pages and find credible health information.



Who is the **author**?

- Health professionals and individuals representing health organizations or associations are likely to provide the best information.
- Laypersons writing about their own health experiences may not have a complete understanding of the health issue.

Is the information **fact or opinion**?

- Credible health information should give more than one point of view on a topic.
- Information presented as facts should include the source of the information.
- Learning about other's opinions can be helpful; just make sure you don't make decisions based on opinions only.

How **current** is the information?

- Health advice can change as new research findings are reported. Check to see if the website was recently updated.
- If you find conflicting information on different sites, be sure to check the time of the last update. New information is likely to be more accurate.

How **accurate** is the information?

- Accurate websites will cite the source for the information

- If the information sounds too good to be true, it probably is: watch out for gimmicks and advertisements
- Well known health organizations generally have more accurate information
- Keep in mind that website information is not individualized. The most appropriate health advice considers your medical history, health conditions and medications.
- Information provided by foreign country sites (e.g. co.uk sites) may discuss treatments not available in the U.S.

Who is **funding** the website?

- Sponsorship should be easy to find. The sponsor's name can usually be found at the top or bottom of the webpage. If you can't find a sponsor than be cautious about the validity of the information.
- Website address endings may indicate the funding source
 - .gov Government sponsored websites
 - .edu Educational websites
 - .org Non-commercial websites
 - .com Commercial websites

Does the site appear to be **professionally created**?

- Page appearance is important, but don't get caught up in flashy words or design. Content is the most important factor.
- Health websites may have different sections for consumers and health professionals. The health professional section is likely to be written in



technical language. Use the section that is more understandable to you.

- If website links aren't working, this may mean the website has not been updated recently and the information may not reflect the latest research findings.

Examples of credible health information sources

An extensive list of health websites can be found at the Medical Library Association at <http://www.mlanet.org/resources/userguide.html>

You can also ask us to locate credible websites that are specific for your needs. Go to <http://www.JustAskBlue.com> to check out our website to see past news capsules, submit medication questions and get access to up-to-date credible health websites.