

How to Find Trustworthy Health Information on the Internet

Not all information on the Internet is dependable or correct. Use these questions as a guide to help you in your search.

Does the website tell you who is responsible for the site?

- Look for links on the home page that say “About Us,” “About This Site,” or “Contact Us.”
- Check the bottom of the homepage for a copyright notice, or other links that say “Our Sponsors,” “Privacy Policy,” or “Editorial Board.”
- It should be easy to get in touch with the webmaster or organization sponsoring the site. Look for a phone number, email address or other contact info.

Is the website providing information or trying to sell you something?

- Trustworthy information often comes from websites run by nonprofit educational or medical organizations or government agencies whose sole purpose is to provide information. These sites typically end in: .org, .edu, .gov.
- Be cautious about using health information from websites selling products or services.

Is the website asking for your personal information? Does it explain why they want it and what exactly they’ll do with your personal information?

- Some websites have strict safeguards to protect your information but others do not and may even sell your information to other organizations.
- Find the website’s privacy policy before giving out personal info. There is often a link to it on the home page and if you have doubts or concerns after reading the policy, don’t share your personal information with the website.

What are the sources of information on the website?

- Sources should always be identified on the website, preferably based on medical references or research. Look for links or descriptions on the homepage: “Advisory Board,” “Editorial Board,” “Reviewers,” or “Review Policies.”
- Websites that compare quality of care provided by hospitals, nursing homes, medical groups, or health care providers should explain where the info comes from, what it means, and how it is checked for accuracy.

Does the language seem unbiased, objective, and balanced?

- Information should be up to date and well written by qualified health professionals.
- Look for different points of view, mentions of limitations of the information, and cautions about use of health information.
- Make sure opinions are supported by reasons.
- Technical terms should be clearly explained.
- Language should be professional and easy to understand.

Visit more than one website and compare what you find. In general, information is more trustworthy when you find it on more than one website.

Trust your instincts. If the information on a website doesn’t seem reasonable or believable, don’t use it. Use the research you’ve done online to put together a list of questions or topics to discuss with your doctor.