



Tips for Acquiring Online Health Information

If you have ever used a search engine to find out more information about a health-related topic, you know there are thousands of health-related Web sites on the Internet. Knowing how to choose which Web site to trust is important when dealing with your health.

What to look for

1. *Who sponsors the Web site? Can you easily identify the sponsor?*
Web sites cost money—is the funding source readily apparent?
2. *Is it obvious how you can reach the sponsor?*
Trustworthy Web sites will have contact information for you to use. For example, the Web site should list an e-mail address, phone number, or a mailing address where the sponsor can be reached.
3. *Who wrote the information?*
Authors and contributors should be identified. Any financial interest in the content of the Web page should also be clear. There is a big difference between a Web site developed by a person with a financial interest in a topic versus a Web site developed using strong scientific evidence.
4. *Who reviews the information? Does the Web site have an editorial board?*
Dependable Web sites will tell you where the health information came from and how it has been reviewed.
5. *When was the information written?*
Look carefully on the home page to find out when the Web site was last updated. As medical advances and new research emerges, the recommendations change. Just note, not all older information is bad—there is much general health information that is tried and true and doesn't change.
6. *Is your privacy protected? Does the Web site clearly state a privacy policy?*
Be aware of fraud on the Internet. As a general rule, never give your Social Security number on the Internet.
7. *Does the Web site make claims that seem too good to be true?* If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. See if you can find other Web sites that give the same information.

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