



## YOU SHOULD KNOW:

- ◆ Anyone can put *anything* on the internet.
- ◆ Anyone with access to a computer can post information online. There is information online that is wrong *and can possibly hurt your health*.
- ◆ It is important to make sure that the information you get is not going to hurt you in any way. Note that:
  - ⇒ *There are no laws about who can and cannot post information online.*
  - ⇒ *There are no laws that make sure that online information is correct.*
- ◆ Health information from the internet should **NEVER** be used in place of advice from your doctor.
- ◆ It is important to only use trusted websites when looking for health information and to always review sites to make sure the information they offer is good.
- ◆ You have two options when you're looking for online health information:
  1. Use sites that have been reviewed by a reliable, independent agency, such as:
    - ⇒ U.S. National Library of Medicine: **nlm.nih.gov**
    - ⇒ World Health Organization: **who.int**
    - ⇒ Center for Disease Control & Prevention: **cdc.gov**
  2. Review the sites yourself. Guidelines can be found at **mlanet.org/p/cm/ld/fid=398**

## REVIEWING WEBSITES

### *Who runs the site?*

- ✓ Is the site run by a trusted organization or agency such as the government (.gov), an educational institution (.edu), or a non-profit advocacy group (.org)?
- ✓ Is the site either free of advertising or, if there is advertising, is it clearly marked? It is usually best to avoid **.com** sites as they are often trying to sell products.
- ✓ Is there a way to read about who runs the site (an "About Us" link) or a way to contact those who run the site (a "Contact Us" link)?

See other side

## IS THE INFORMATION BACKED BY EXPERTS?

- ✓ Does the site refer to experts in the field, real medical studies, articles, and other works? (Check whether any “experts” mentioned are connected to a trusted institution by going to that institution’s website, and be sure that studies mentioned are specific: it’s not enough to write simply “studies show.”)
- ✓ Does it contain links to other reliable sites and information?
- ✓ Has the information been “peer-reviewed” (reviewed by other experts in the field)?

## IS THE INFORMATION UP TO DATE?

- ✓ Does the site offer recent “page last updated” or “date last reviewed” dates? (Note: some health information does not need to be updated, such as human anatomy pages.)
- ✓ Do the links to other sites work properly?

## BE CAREFUL OF SITES THAT:

- ⊗ Don’t list who runs the site or don’t offer a way to contact them.
- ⊗ Are trying to sell a product.
- ⊗ Offer only one point of view on a controversial topic.
- ⊗ Have errors in grammar and spelling, are hard to read, or are hard to understand.
- ⊗ Do not have an obvious privacy policy (there should be a link to their policy on the homepage).
- ⊗ Offer miracle cures, medicines with secret ingredients or “quick fixes.” Many sites that are selling health products & medicine prey on people desperate for a cure. If the writing is overly emotional (using all capital and bolded letters or saying things like “YOU MUST ACT NOW!”) or they offer no evidence behind their claims, be careful.

**IF IT SOUNDS TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE, IT PROBABLY IS!**

## GET A SECOND OPINION!

- ✓ Always get a second opinion from your medical provider before you try any advice or health product from the internet.



If you still have questions, talk to a medical librarian at your local hospital or college.