



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 <https://www.mlanet.org/resources/information-for-patients-and-caregivers/>

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.