

Infection Prevention and You



Finding reliable health information on the web

Millions of websites offer health-related information. Some of the information is reliable and up to date, but some of it is just wrong or impossible to understand. How can you tell the good from the bad? Here are some tips from MedlinePlus (<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/>), a service of the U.S. National Library of Medicine and National Institutes of Health.

Where did this information come from?

- The website's home page should tell you who publishes the site. Is it a branch of the government, a university, a health organization, a hospital, or a business? If the home page does not give you this information, look for an "About us" link or tab. It should say who is running the website and why.
- Websites published by the U.S. government (.gov), a nonprofit organization (.org), or a college/university (.edu) may be more reliable sources of information. Many commercial websites (.com) offer reliable and accurate information, but some commercial for-profit sites may present information in order to sell products.
- Do not rely on just one website. Instead, look at multiple websites to gather as much information as you can.

Is the information factual?

- Health websites for consumers should use simple language and be easy to understand.
- It should be factual and based on medical research, not opinion.
- Look for the author of the information. The author may be an individual, such as a medical expert, or an organization, such as the American Cancer Society.
- Do not use anonymous chat rooms or message boards.

How up to date is this information?

- Health information is always changing. The website should post the date on which the page was last reviewed or updated on the bottom of the page.
- Look for information that is less than two years old.

Do they want your information? What will they do with it?

- Your health information is confidential. Some sites will ask you to sign in or become a member. They may even ask you for personal information.
- Look for a privacy policy to see how they will maintain your privacy.

Additional resources

General health information

Healthfinder (Available in Spanish) www.healthfinder.gov/

Mayo Clinic www.mayoclinic.com/

National Library of Medicine <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/>

National Institutes of Health - Health Info Page <http://health.nih.gov/>

Disease and conditions

Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (Some articles available in Spanish) <http://ahrq.gov/>

CDC – Health Topics <http://www.cdc.gov/DiseasesConditions/>

National Cancer Institute (Available in Spanish) <http://www.cancer.gov/>