



ONLINE HEALTH INFORMATION

— Should you believe what you see?

Type in the words “health information” or a specific condition such as “diabetes” on any Internet search engine, and you will come up with hundreds or even thousands of links, or pages of information. Where do you go first? What information do you trust?

Anyone with access and an interest can post health information on the Internet. Be prepared for information overload and learn how to evaluate what you find.



Check the Web site’s source and funding. Be cautious of sites that offer information from a single source, that seem to primarily promote a product or position, that tout “miracle cures,” or that push treatments that sound too good to be true.



Check how often the information is updated, when it was last updated, and who reviews the accuracy.



Be wary of information posted anonymously. Authors’ affiliations and credentials should be provided. The sources of the information and proper attribution should be provided.



Keep in mind that the health information you research on the Internet should complement, not replace, the communication between you and your doctor.

Adapted from material prepared by Mi Young Hwang and Richard M. Glass for the *Journal of American Medical Association*, for use in Iowa by Elisabeth Schafer, extension nutritionist, Amy Miller, extension assistant, and Diane Nelson, extension communication specialist.

... and justice for all

The Iowa Cooperative Extension Service’s programs and policies are consistent with pertinent federal and state laws and regulations on nondiscrimination. Many materials can be made available in alternative formats for ADA clients.

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SUGGESTED SITES:

American Medical Association

<http://www.ama-assn.org>

Provides consumer health information that has been reviewed by medical experts and also links to other reliable health information sites.

Healthfinder - <http://www.healthfinder.com>

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services-sponsored gateway to reviewed resources available on consumer health and human services information.

MEDLINE (National Library of Medicine)

<http://www.medline.com>

Searchable database of more than 8.8 million references to articles published in 3,800 bio-medical journals.

Oncolink - <http://www.oncolink.com>

Provides comprehensive information about cancer sponsored by the University of Pennsylvania Medical Center and the University of Pennsylvania Cancer Center.

Quackwatch, Inc. - <http://www.quackwatch.com>

A nonprofit corporation that combats health-related fraud and myths.

Tufts University Nutrition Navigator

<http://www.navigator.tufts.edu>

Provides links to nutrition information that has been reviewed by a team of nutrition experts.

U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) - <http://www.cdc.gov>

Provides health information on diseases, health risks, and prevention guidelines.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion National Health Information Center

<http://nhic-nt.health.org/> or 800/336-4797

U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)

<http://www.fda.gov>

Latest information on foods, human and animal drugs, cosmetics, and related issues.

Virtual Hospital - <http://www.vh.org>

Provides consumer information on various health conditions; maintained by the University of Iowa.