

STUDENT HANDOUT

Evaluating Health Information Online: A Checklist

When seeking health information online, it is important to keep in mind that the Internet is not regulated and anyone can set up a website. The criteria presented here will help to decide whether information found online is credible or not.

- Does the website say who is responsible for the information and how you can contact them?* Look for links that say *About us*, *About this site*, or *Contact us*. Be wary if you can't find out who runs the site and how to contact them.
- Is the purpose of the website to give information, or is it trying to sell you something?* Commercial websites (with a URL address ending in .com) might provide information that supports what they are selling and not a balanced view. Be sure that the information presented on the website is suitable for the topic and is consistent with information seen from other sources.
- Does the web address confirm that its scope and/or purpose is suitable?* For example, .edu for educational sites, .gov/gc.ca for government sites, .org for non-profit organizations, etc. You can usually get reliable health information from non-profit educational or medical organizations and government agencies. Health information should be unbiased and balanced, based on solid medical evidence, and not just someone's opinion.
- Does the website give references to articles in medical journals or other sources to back up its health information?* The most trustworthy health information is based on medical research. The website should provide links to other resources that can be accessed for information on this topic.
- Is the information provided easy to understand and presented clearly?* Technical or unfamiliar terms should be clearly explained.
- Is there evidence that the website is well maintained and does not include misspellings or broken links?* Websites should tell you when the information was prepared and updated, and resources and links should be recent.

Note: The material used to create this checklist has been obtained from the following sources:
Evaluating Information Found on the Internet, Johns Hopkins Sheridan Libraries. Retrieved from <http://guides.library.jhu.edu/content.php?pid=198142&sid=1657518>
Internet Research: Finding and Evaluating Resources, Simon Fraser University Library. Retrieved from <https://www.lib.sfu.ca/help/research-assistance/finding-evaluating-resources>