

## MEDLINEPLUS GUIDE TO HEALTHY WEB SURFING

What should you look for when evaluating the quality of health information on Web sites?

### **CONSIDER THE SOURCE** – Use recognized authorities

- Know who is responsible for the content
- Look for an "about us" page
- Check to see who runs the site

### **FOCUS ON QUALITY** – All web sites are not created equal

- Does the site have an editorial board?
- Is the information reviewed before it is posted?

### **BE A CYBERSKEPTIC** – Quackery abounds on the Web

- Use caution if the site uses a sensational writing style (lots of exclamation points, for example.)
- A health Web site for consumers should use simple language, not technical jargon.
- Get a second opinion! Check more than one site.

### **LOOK FOR THE EVIDENCE** – Rely on medical research, not opinion

- Does the site identify the author?
- Does it rely on testimonials?

### **CHECK FOR CURRENCY** – Look for the latest information

- Look for dates on documents

### **BEWARE OF BIAS** – What is the purpose? Who is providing the funding?

- Check to see if the site is supported by public funds, donations or by commercial advertising
- Advertisements should be labeled

### **PROTECT YOUR PRIVACY** – Health information should be confidential

- Does the site have a privacy policy and tell you what information they collect?

**CONSULT WITH YOUR HEALTH PROFESSIONAL** – Patient/provider partnerships lead to the best medical decisions

### **For further information**

Visit the MedlinePlus page on [Evaluating Health Information](#) and [Evaluating Internet Health Information: A Tutorial from the National Library of Medicine](#).

### **Source:**

These points were excerpted from <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/healthywebsurfing.html>