

## Finding Good Web Sites for Health Information



There is a lot of health information available on the internet. However, there are no restrictions on who can create a Web site or what they include on it. Therefore, it is important to make sure the information you find online is accurate. Here are a few tips for finding credible Web sites.

- It should be easy to tell who is running the site. You can usually find more information by looking at the “About Us” section of the Web site.
- Look at the purpose of the site. Are they trying to sell you something? Do they have a “miracle cure”?
- Look for good sites that end in:
  - .gov** These sites are run by the government such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ([www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov))
  - .edu** These sites are run by universities or medical centers such as Penn State University ([www.psu.edu](http://www.psu.edu))
  - .org** These sites are run by non-profit organizations such as the American Diabetes Association ([www.diabetes.org](http://www.diabetes.org))

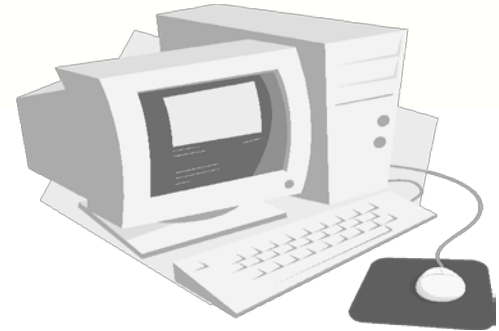
**Note:** .com sites are commercial and are not always accurate.

- Look at the site for a current date for updated information.
- There should always be a “Contact Us” Section listed.
- Sites that show a HON (Health on the Net) Code like WellSpan Health System ([www.wellspan.org](http://www.wellspan.org)) must carry out specific standards for medical excellence.



## More tips to access online health information safely:

- Web sites provided by your government or recognized institutions (public hospitals, universities, etc.) are offered for your benefit only and usually contain lots of practical and reliable information and tips.
- If possible, ask your doctor for a list of reliable health Web sites to visit.
- Always use more than one Web site to receive balanced information and to check information.
- Upon visiting any Web site, check the source of the information provided. Who has written the health information? Is that person qualified to give this information? If not, have the references from which he/she obtained this information, been provided?
- Check the privacy policy of a Web site to know what information about you (non-personal) is collected by them and if you provide any personal information, what they do with this. (Some sites may share your email addresses with others for advertising).
- Many reliable Web sites have a seal of certification from a trusted accrediting organization like the Health On the Net Foundation. This certifies that the site provides transparency regarding the authority, authorship, confidentiality, and funding; is up-to date; is honest about advertising; and provides clear distinction between advertisement and editorial content. Always click to make sure that certification is still valid.
- The status of certification of a Web site can be confirmed using the HONcode Toolbar which can be downloaded at:  
**<http://www.hon.ch/HONcode/Plugin/Plugins.html>**  
Please remember that as a web page may change at any time, HON cannot verify and assure the content, and for any doubt, a health professional should be contacted.



- Always be careful. **DO NOT** believe claims or promises of miraculous cures, wonder drugs and other extreme statements unless there is proof to these claims.
- **NEVER** regard information found on the internet, in a book or anywhere else as medical advice. Only a medical professional can give you medical advice after consulting with you and gaining knowledge about your specific condition.
- Those ordering drugs from online pharmacies based outside their country of residence should make sure that there are no legal laws against doing this. Some countries do not allow medications from other countries into their own.
- Quite a few online pharmacies have been involved in various scams. Thus, you should be careful when accessing such sites. Many US online pharmacy sites have the seal of certification 'VIPPS' (Verified Internet Pharmacy Practice Sites) developed by the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy. These sites are usually reliable.

