

How to find trustworthy information on the Internet

The Internet offers a richness of health information, but finding trustworthy, high quality information can be difficult. How do you know what's good information and what's less reliable?

The Canadian Health Network consulted with health information experts to develop a checklist to help you search for reliable online health information:

- ☑ **Is the resource credible?** Is the name of the author or organization clearly stated? Are they an accredited authority on the subject?
- ☑ **Is the content relevant?** Is there enough detail or does the information seem superficial? Is the information presented in a Canadian context?
- ☑ **Is the resource timely?** Is the information reviewed or updated often? Is the date of the last update marked on each item or screen?
- ☑ **Is there clear and adequate disclosure?** Are commercial links and sponsorships stated? If you have to register to use the site, is the reason clear and your privacy ensured?
- ☑ **Are there clear caution statements?** Does the site state that its health information should not be taken as health advice or a substitute for visiting a health professional? If there are fees associated with use of its resources, are they explained?



Using the Internet to Create "Virtual" Communities

Information, feedback and support on health issues from other women can be as close as a computer with Internet access. Women can connect to others who have shared similar health experiences - right across Canada - thanks to the increase of safe and reliable online discussion groups. Online discussion groups are an important resource for women because:

They provide information about where to get more resources.

Links provide instant access to useful information and services, and discussion boards offer Internet forums and bulletin boards. Users write posts or messages that can be archived for weeks or even years. Many women use these web tools to have a conversation, share advice and troubleshoot.

Online support encourages women to share openly. Access 24/7 and confidentiality are important features of online

discussion groups. They provide opportunities for women to get involved and get support on their own schedule without having to leave home.

The Internet connects women who may be isolated. For women who face challenges like living with a disability or in an abusive relationship, online support can reduce feelings of isolation. Geography can also isolate women from their communities and have a negative impact on their health. For **women living in northern, rural or remote regions**, it may be a lot easier to get support online than in a face-to-face meeting.

New to online discussion groups? Try a reputable site like www.womenshealthmatters.ca (hosted by The New Women's College Hospital in Toronto) and click on "Le Club". You can read personal stories, participate in conversations and submit health questions.

The Canadian Health Network is brought to you by the Public Health Agency of Canada and major health organizations across the country. www.womenshealthmatters.ca at The New Women's College Hospital is proud to be the CHN Women Affiliate and a partner in FWIO's ROSE Program.

This article was adapted from "How to Find the Most Trustworthy Information on the Internet" by the Canadian Health Network and "Creating Community Online" written by Kristin Jenkins for the Canadian Health Network.



www.canadian-health-network.ca

The New Women's College Hospital is proud to be the Women's Affiliate for the Canadian Health Network