

How to find good quality health information on the internet

Introduction

This leaflet will help you search for good quality health information on the internet.

First of all, it is important to be aware that:

- anyone can publish anything on the internet
- there are no quality controls on the internet
- the information you find may not be accurate and may be out of date

This leaflet will:

- help you to assess information you find on the internet
- give you details of quality websites about general health
- offer suggestions of where you can get more help

What information can I trust about my condition on the internet?

There are 2 standards that good health information websites can be given, these are:

- The Information Standard – commissioned by NHS England. Go to www.england.nhs.uk/tis/ to find out which websites have been awarded this



- Health on the Net Foundation (HON) Code of Conduct– a world-wide standard given to websites that provide reliable online health information www.healthonnet.org/pat.html

Please note that some websites use this logo even if they have not been certified. To check, click on the logo on the webpage, this should take you to a page with a 'HON' code number.



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How do I assess the quality of a website?

- **Who is the author/publisher?**
Websites should have an 'About us' link and this should clearly state who wrote it.
- **When was it written?**
A good website will tell you when the information was last updated - if it is not recent or there is no date, then the information may be out of date. If the site has links to other websites which do not work, this suggests that the website is not being kept up to date.
- **Who is it written for?**
The information on some websites is aimed at health professionals, so relies on the viewer having a high level of medical knowledge. It is best to find websites which are written for patients or the general public as medical terms will be explained. Please see the section 'Recommended websites for health information' below.
- **Where does the information come from?**
If the website refers to other sources of information, this shows that the information provided is not just the author's opinion, but is also shared by other professionals. If the author uses references this shows that they have a wide knowledge of the topic.
- **Where was the information published?**
If the information comes from outside the United Kingdom, then this information may not always be appropriate. To check, you need to use the 'About us' link or look at the web address. Sometimes you can tell from the last 2 letters where the information is from, for example: uk=United Kingdom, ca=Canada, fr=France.

Recommended websites for general health information

NHS

This is the official website for the NHS and the United Kingdom's largest health website.

Website: www.nhs.uk

**Patient
Information**

Behind the Headlines

This explains the facts behind health stories in the media.

Website: www.nhs.uk/news

Patient

An award winning independent website.

Website: www.patient.info

Further information

Patient health information enquiry service

Our Library & Knowledge Service can signpost you to good quality health information on the internet.

Website: www.gloshospitals.nhs.uk

Type in the search box 'Patient health information enquiry service'

Gloucestershire Public Libraries

Contact your local public library for help with using computers and getting online.

Tel: 0845 230 5420

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