Finding good quality information on the internet

The internet has a lot of information about my condition- what can I trust?

There are 2 standards that health information websites can be accredited with:

- The Information Standard – an independent certification programme commissioned by NHS England.
- Health on the Net Foundation – an international organisation which promotes reliable online health information. Please note that some websites use this logo even if they have not been certified. To check, just click on the logo, this should take you to a page with the HON code number.

Recommended websites for general health information:

- NHS Choices – the official website for the NHS, including health information and Behind the Headlines, which explains the facts behind health stories in the media.
- Patient – an award winning independent website

How do I assess the quality of a website?

- Who is the author/publisher?

Make sure the person/organisation publishing the information has the appropriate knowledge and question why they would have written it. Websites should have an "About us" link and this should clearly provide details of who wrote it.

- When was it written?

A good website will tell you when it was last updated - if it is not recent or there is no date, then the information may be out of date. Also if the site contains links to other websites which do not work this suggests that the website is not being maintained.

- Who is it written for?

Some websites are aimed at health professionals and require 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.

- What evidence/research does it use?

If the website refers to other sources of information, this shows that the information provided is not just the author's opinion. Using references to other types of information also demonstrates that the author has a broad knowledge of the topic.

- Who else uses it?

If other trustworthy websites link to the website then this also shows other people believe it is of good quality.

- Where in the world was the information published?

If the information comes from outside the United Kingdom then this information may not be appropriate. To check, you need to use the "About us" link or look at the web address - the last 2 letters will tell you where it is from e.g. .uk = United Kingdom, .ca=Canada, .es=Spain

Further help

Speak to your Healthcare Professional

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

Gloucestershire Public Libraries (0845 230 5420)