

Staff Guidelines

Finding Reliable Health and Nutrition Information Online

When looking for or recommending online health and nutrition information, use the following guidelines.

1. Use a reliable website.

Reliable sources usually have website addresses (urls) that end in: “.gov,” “.edu,” or “.org”:

- .gov is for a government agency.
- .edu is for an educational institution like a university.
- .org is for a professional organization like a scientific or research society.

2. Check to see who runs the website.

Go to the "About Us" page. Check to see if the website is run by a government agency, a nonprofit or professional organization, a health system, a commercial business or an individual. Commercial (.com) health sites may be sponsored by a company in order to sell products.

3. Make sure the website is updated regularly.

Health information changes constantly as new information is learned. The website should reflect the most up-to-date information. The date of latest revision should be clearly posted.

4. Use websites that present information clearly and understandably.

A health website for consumers should use simple language, not technical jargon.

5. Be aware of who the information is intended for.

Websites should state whether the information is intended for consumers or health professionals. Many health websites have two different areas, one for consumers and one for professionals.

6. Make sure the website presents facts that can be verified, not opinions.

Look for recommendations from reputable scientific or government organizations. The recommendations should be based on several studies published in scientific journals.

Be wary of:

- recommendations that promise a quick fix
- health claims that sound too good to be true
- recommendations based on a single study
- recommendations made to help sell a product



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