

Finding Good Quality Health Information Online

An information leaflet for patients

The aim of this leaflet is to:

- **Provide advice for finding high quality health information online.**
- **Help you evaluate the information available to you online.**

The Internet makes finding health information easier and faster than ever before. It's a great resource, and can be a useful way of supplementing the information given to you by health care professionals during your treatment.

However, it's important to remember that you can't trust everything you read on the Internet. Not everything published on there is reliable, accurate and current, or of a good standard.

Bear in mind that anyone has the freedom to post or publish information online. Also, no-one is responsible for double checking what's on there for errors, currency or trustworthiness.

It's therefore up to you - the one reading the information - to make a choice about how useful, relevant, reliable and up to date it is.



Recommended Reliable Resources

1. Patient.co.uk (www.patient.co.uk)

This is an excellent site for finding health information. It is popular with both patients and healthcare professionals.

Patient.co.uk was set up over 15 years ago. It now has over 8 million visitors every month. On it you'll find:

- **Leaflets on health information**
- **A wellbeing centre**
- **A free online health check**
- **Many different discussion forums.**

The site has achieved the Information Standard, and the Health on the Net Foundation Standard. This means you can trust that the information you're reading is reliable.

2. NHS Choices (<http://www.nhs.uk>)

This is a reliable, trustworthy and up-to-date site. It's dedicated to providing high quality information on:

- **Medical conditions**
- **Healthcare**
- **Treatments**
- **Local services**
- **Healthy living**

It is funded by the Department of Health, and bases its information on the best and most recent scientific research available.

3. Behind the Headlines (<http://www.nhs.uk/news>)

Each day the NHS Choices team select health stories that are making the headlines.

These are sent to Bazian, leading provider of evidence based healthcare information.



Bazian's clinicians and scientists analyse the research and produce evidence based assessments that are edited and published by NHS Choices.

Finding Quality Information Online

When looking for health information online, always ask yourself: **WWW?**

1. Who wrote and/or published the information you're reading? Are they a recognised and reliable authority?

Consider the site's source, and ask yourself about its purpose and potential bias.

For example, is the site designed to provide information? Or is it trying to sell you something?

A reliable site will provide contact information or an 'About Us' page. If a site does not have one or both of these, be wary of it.

2. What content is published on the site?

Check the site's accuracy and quality. Make sure its information is current and up-to-date.

Look out for evidence-based information. Does the site base its information on relevant, factual evidence? And does it say where it got its information from? If not, it may not be trustworthy.

Check when the information was last updated. A reliable site will be monitored and updated regularly.

3. Where in the world has the information on the site come from?

Certain types of information, for example statistics or information about particular treatments or trials, might not be relevant to you if they relate to somewhere outside the U.K.

Check the site's web address. This will give you an idea of site's country of origin. It will also reveal the kind of organisation that produced it.

The site could have been produced by the government, a not-for-profit organisation, an individual, or a company.

It's also worth checking the site's URL (uniform resource locator). For instance:

.com or .org = an organisation

.ac or .edu = an educational website

Top Tips for Searching for Health Information

- Don't take the information you read on one site at face value. Check with another one to see if it says the same thing. Get a second opinion.
- Don't just rely on the information you read online. Talk to your doctor about what you've read, and ask questions.
- Stay safe when searching online, and protect your privacy.

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Please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) if you require this leaflet in a different format, or would like to feedback your experience of the hospital. Email ruh-tr.PatientAdviceandLiaisonService@nhs.net or telephone 01225 825656.