

700 Children's Drive Columbus, Ohio 43205-2696 nationwidechildrens.org

Can You Trust Health Information on the Web?

At Nationwide Children's Hospital we think it's important that you can trust the information you find online. Here are some things to look for when you search for health information on the Internet.

Plan your Search

☑ Make a list of your goals.

Different websites excel at
different things. For example, are
you looking for information or
support? Chat rooms and web sites
put together by families can be
wonderful sources of support, but
may fall short on providing
medical information. Medical

journal web sites may be too cold

and distant for your needs. Your

goals will help determine where

you should look.

- ☑ Talk with your doctor or nurse.

 She or he will be able to help you with the search terms
 and spelling of those terms that will help you in your search. Or you can ask the librarian at the Children's Family Library to help
 - you find what you need. They will help you with learning the jargon and terms you need to know. Copy down the words that may be useful as you do searches.
- ☑ Be prepared to find conflicting information. Almost every health issue sparks differing opinions. Trust yourself and your provider to find the answers that best fit your family.

Check the Source

✓ Look for .edu, .org, .gov in the website's name. This stands for educational institution, organization, or government

- agency. The information on a site that ends in .com (for commercial) may not be impartial. There's a possibility that it's offered to promote a particular product or service.
- the author's name (or the name of the organization responsible for the document) clearly stated? Is the author a professional or accredited authority on the subject? If not, does the author state his/her perspective on the subject (for example, by saying "I'm a cancer survivor," or "I've used chiropractors for 10 years")? Does the site provide contact information about the author (full name, address, phone number, email address)? Is the author's interest in developing and sharing this information clear (for example, a non-profit organization

that promotes
 exercise and
 active living
 trying to sell you
 exercise
 equipment)?

☑ Check the date. You should be able to tell when the document was last reviewed, updated, or checked for accuracy. Is the date of the last update clearly marked? If information is only valid for a short time, is this fact clearly labeled?

Judge the Content

☑ Is it focused on pediatrics?

Health information and advice for adults may not apply to a child.

Be sure the source of the information has expertise in pediatrics.

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- ☑ Do they diagnose you or offer specific medical advice for your situation? No website can know your family well enough to diagnose. Any site that claims to know the best treatment for your child's medical symptoms is ... well, is wrong.
- ☑ Is there clear and adequate disclosure? Is there potential for bias or conflict of interest (for example, a company telling you that only their product or service is valuable)? Are all sides of the issue presented? Are commercial links and/or sponsorships clearly stated and separate from the health information content? If the site collects information about you, do they tell you exactly why they want it? Are their privacy guidelines stated?
- ☑ What kind of evidence is provided to endorse a specific treatment or service? (Keep in mind that scientific studies and research have a different credibility than first-hand experience.)
- Are there clear caution statements? Does the site offer a clear statement that health information should not be taken as health advice or a substitute for visiting a health professional?
- ☑ Check the funding source. Sometimes a site will be funded by outside sources like advertisers or foundations. Funding source should be clearly identified. Advertising should be presented in a way that you can clearly see the difference between ads and content.
- ☑ Discuss your findings with your healthcare provider. The information you find may not apply to your child and his condition. Your doctor or nurse can help you to interpret and understand how the information relates to you and your child.