

Get Started with These Web Sites for Reliable Health Information:

<https://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/>

MedlinePlus is a publicly available database produced by the National Library of Medicine for patients and their families. It offers “information about diseases, conditions, and wellness issues in language you can understand. MedlinePlus offers reliable, up-to-date health information, anytime, anywhere, for free.”

<https://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/spanish/>

This is the same as MedlinePlus but in Spanish.

<https://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/healthtopics.html>

Search MedlinePlus by topic and “read about symptoms, causes, treatment, and prevention for over 950 diseases, illnesses, health conditions, and wellness issues.”

<http://healthfinder.gov/>

This database is similar to MedlinePlus and put out by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

<http://www.mlanet.org/p/cm/ld/fid=397>

This link is to the Medical Library Association’s top health web sites list including sites for general health, breast cancer, Diabetes, heart disease, eye diseases, HIV/AIDS, and stroke.

www.pubmed.org

Search over “25 million citations for Biomedical Literature.” There is full text at times or links, though this more of a citation index.

Healthnet:

Connecticut residents can seek assistance through the UConn Health library. They will research medical questions and customize an information packet specific to your needs.

<http://library.uchc.edu/departm/hnet/research.html>

860-679-4055 <- You do not have to have internet to utilize.

What Should I Look for When Looking at Web Sites?

D.A.T.A. P.I.C.

1) Domain – the .com or .edu of a web address (**WHAT**)

Domains for web sites that are usually credible:

.gov – government agency (ex: usa.gov);

.us – state agency in the United States (ctdol.state.ct.us);

.edu – accredited, degree granting, educational institutions (uconn.edu);

.mil – armed forces (marines.mil); and

.int – international organizations (Interpol.int).

Domains that may require additional scrutiny:

.org – non-profit organizations (redcross.org);

.net – a network (citationmachine.net); and

.com – commercial web sites (amazon.com).

2) Accuracy – reliability and truthfulness of the information (**WHAT**)

This can be hard to decipher, but if it gives sources for facts and statistics that is a good thing. If it has grammatical or spelling mistakes or appears unedited that is bad.

3) Transparency – who is involved (**WHO and WHERE**)

Legitimate individuals and organizations do not hide who they are. They have a means of contacting them. Look for contact information that is vague. Do they give an actual address or a P.O. Box? A P.O. Box might be a sign that the web site does not want you knowing where they are. Email addresses like customerservice@xyz.org without names could be a warning sign. The people you are dealing with should not be a mystery.

4) Authority – the source of the information (**WHO AND WHY**)

- Who or what organization is responsible for this web site?

- Is the individual or organization verifiably qualified to be presenting the information on its web site?

What Should I Look for When Looking at Web Sites? (Continued)

5) Purpose – the reason the information exists (*WHY*)

What is the function of the web site?

- To educate
- To offer advice
- To entertain
- To make money
- To broadcast opinion

If the purpose is not to educate or to offer advice then you should be concerned (especially when it is health information)! And if the web site is offering advice that does not mean that the advice is necessarily good.

6) Impartiality/Bias – info presented objectively (*WHAT and WHY*)

- Is the information biased?
- Does the information take a side saying they are right and others are wrong?
- Is the information presented in a narrow way and thus only gives you one side?
- Is the whole picture provided?
- Is information intentionally left out?
- Is the way the information is presented worrisome to you in any way? If it is that could be a bad sign. Web sites can take important causes and/or emotional issues and use them for their own purposes, which might not be clear but often involves them making money.

7) Currency – the timeliness of the information (*WHEN*)

- Is the web site current?
- Does the web site tell you when it was last updated?
- Or does it have a copyright (not hard to fake a copyright symbol though)
- Is the information outdated?

Evaluating Web Sites for Health Information

