



FACTS OR FICTION?

Online

→ Quality health and wellbeing content online can help you make informed decisions.

→ In what formats is health information available online?

Text, images, audio, videos, animations, tools and apps.

78%

of Australians say they looked for health information online in the past year.

→ How can you consume it?

Via computers, laptops, tablets, mobile phones and social media.

→ Why do people use the internet to seek health advice?

They have limited time, want a second opinion, or they might be looking for information for family or friends.



When looking for trusted health information online, ask yourself these questions...

Can you trust it?

Who wrote it?

- What are the qualifications of the writers?
- Who publishes the content?

TIP » Check the 'About us' page.

TIP » Look for .gov or .edu sites.

Is it right for you?

Is it clear?

- Is the information easy to find and understand?
- Are images or video used to help explain the text?

TIP » Browse the site or use any available search features.

Compare different sources

Is it up to date?

- When was it written?
- When was it last reviewed?

TIP » Look for this information at the bottom of each page.

Think for yourself

Is your privacy respected?

- Is there a privacy policy on the site?
- If the site collects personal information, is it secure and private?
- What will your personal information be used for?

TIP » Look for a 'Privacy statement' or 'Privacy policy'.

Is it accurate?

- Is the information based on research?
- Are information sources provided?

TIP » Look for HoNCode certification – a global standard for quality and transparent health information online.

TIP » Look for references at the end of the page.



Look for clues about the quality of information

Is it balanced?

- Are risks and benefits explained?
- Is the website selling something?
- Is there advertising on the site?

TIP » Commercial interests can mean the information is biased.

TIP » Beware of testimonials – they often make untested claims.

What to do?



If in doubt, call healthdirect on

1800 022 222

to speak with a registered nurse 24/7

Remember, your doctor is the best person to make a diagnosis and answer questions about your health.

Self-care



Visit a pharmacy



See your doctor



Call triple zero (000)



Notes for parents

Parents and guardians should check that websites are appropriate for children.

There are sites that have been developed specifically for the information needs of young people.

Some health information sites may also have a section especially for children.



References

You might find our sources for these tips helpful for further reading:

- Healthy web surfing - www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/healthywebsurfing.html
- Tutorial: Evaluating health information - www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/evaluatinghealthinformation.html
- Content quality guidelines - www.healthfinder.gov/aboutus/content_guidelines.aspx
- Staying safe online - www.nhs.uk/aboutNHSChoices/aboutnhschoices/staying-safe-online/Pages/find-health-information-online.aspx
- Health On the Net Foundation - www.hon.ch/HONcode/Conduct.html
- AIHW. 2018 - <https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/1e037c11-0cd0-4663-a8c0-67cd09b1f30c/aihw-aus-222.pdf>

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