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.
- 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.

84% of Australians say they looked for health information online in the past year.

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

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:

- Content quality guidelines - www.healthfinder.gov/aboutus/content_guidelines.aspx
- Staying safe online - www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/stayingsafeonline.aspx
- Page/Find health information - online apps
- Health On The Net Foundation - www.hon.ch/HONcode/Conduct.html
- NHCCN Ultrafeedback survey, August 2011

Is it up to date?

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

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

Is it accurate?

- Is the information 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.

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

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.

Is it right for you?

- Is the information up to date?
- Is the information easy to find and understand?

TIP » Check the ‘about us’ page.

TIP » Look for .gov or .edu sites.

Think for yourself

Look for clues about the quality of information

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

TIP » Check the ‘about us’ page.

TIP » Look for government or educational sites.

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

TIP » Look for a ‘Privacy statement’ or ‘Privacy policy’.

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

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 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.

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