Finding Reliable Health Information on the Internet

This information will help you learn how to find reliable health information on the Internet.

The Internet has changed the way we find and access health information. The number of websites, social media sites, and apps offering health information keeps growing. While this makes finding health information easier than ever before, it can be hard to know which sources have reliable information and which sources have misinformation (false or wrong information). Misinformation can be dangerous, confusing, and misleading. It can also keep you from getting the information you need to stay healthy and safe. This is why it’s important to check if the information you find on the Internet is reliable and trustworthy.

Remember that the information you find on the Internet doesn’t replace conversations with your healthcare providers. Ask your healthcare providers questions you have about your care.

Questions to Ask When Finding Health Information on the Internet
When looking for information on the Internet, it’s important to ask these 4 questions to check if the information is reliable.

**Who created this information?**
While the Internet makes it easy to find answers to our questions, it’s important to remember that anyone can publish information on the Internet. When looking at a website or app, check to see who wrote the information and if they’re an expert on the topic.

**When was this information written and last updated?**
Health information changes often, so it’s important to check to see when the information was last updated. Reliable websites will post the date or year that the information was published or last updated. This information is often noted at the bottom of the website. A recent date or year tells you the website is current and is updated with new information. While older dates don’t mean that the information is wrong, it can signal that there may be more updated information elsewhere.

**Why does this information exist?**
Does this site or app exist to share information or to sell products? Websites with lots of advertising might present biased information. Biased information is information that reflects one viewpoint more strongly than others, often because it’s trying to convince you to do or buy something.

Some people or organizations may have different reasons to
publish information on the Internet. While some may want to educate you with reliable information, others may want to persuade you to buy something or do something that may benefit them. A reliable website won’t try to make you buy something. Look for websites that just share information.

**Where did this information come from?**

Sometimes, friends or family members we trust might share health information online, but this information might not come from a reliable, trusted source or be based on scientific facts and evidence. This is why it’s important to check where the information came from. Did it come from a reliable source or did it come from someone’s opinion on the topic? While people may have good intentions when they share opinions on the Internet, it’s important to base your health decisions around scientific and reliable information for your safety and the safety of the people around you.

**Health Information at MSK**

It’s not always easy to tell which information is reliable and which is misinformation. At MSK, we want you to feel confident that our information is accurate and trustworthy. Talking with your healthcare providers about your care is the best place to start. Here are some other resources for finding health information at MSK.

**Patient and Caregiver Education**
Our Patient and Caregiver Education Program is dedicated to providing you with clear and understandable educational resources. Health Education Specialists work with MSK’s healthcare providers to create written resources and videos about your care. Our resources can also be translated into any language. Visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

You can also search for more information on websites we vetted and trust by using our Google™ custom search engine. This works like a Google search bar, but all the results you get are from reliable websites we’ve reviewed.

Virtual Programs

Our Virtual Programs offer online education and support for patients, caregivers, and the community, even when you can’t come to MSK in person. Through live, interactive sessions, you can learn about your diagnosis, what to expect during treatment, and how to prepare for the various stages of your cancer care. Sessions are confidential, free, and led by expert clinical staff. If you’re interested in joining a Virtual Program, visit our website at www.mskcc.org/vp for more information.

MSK Library

library.mskcc.org
212-639-7439
You can visit our library website or speak with the library reference staff to find more information about your specific cancer type. You can also request to have library reference staff search for reliable information for you. Email asklibrarian@mskcc.org or fill out this request form: https://library.mskcc.org/help/literature-search.

Visit the Patient and Caregiver Health Information LibGuide on MSK’s library website for a list of health information websites you can trust at libguides.mskcc.org/patient_family_health_information.

For more online information, visit the Cancer Types section of www.mskcc.org.

If you have any questions, contact a member of your healthcare team directly. If you're a patient at MSK and you need to reach a provider after 5:00 PM, during the weekend, or on a holiday, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

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