# Finding good quality health information online

**Your guide to health information on the internet**

## Introduction

There is a huge amount of health information now available online, and it can be difficult to tell what is good and what it not.  This leaflet has been put together to help you find good quality health information online that you can trust. You can then add to the information you may have already been given by your healthcare professional.

If you do not have a computer or access to the internet, you can visit your local public library,  where staff can help you to get online and look at the suggested websites. You can find your local library by visiting https://www.gov.uk/local-library-services

The internet is a great resource, with endless amounts of information. But not everything you find online is accurate, reliable or trustworthy. This is because anyone can create webpages, or add content to existing websites. Many websites don't have quality checks or an editing process, so it is up to you to assess the quality of the information. The following tips will help you to do this, but it is always advisable to check the information you've found with your healthcare professional.

## Quality Standards

Quality standards are an easy way to quickly judge if a website is providing you with good quality information. There are two quality standards used in health information which act as a clear indication of trustworthy health information. There are some very good health websites that won't have these standards, but the standards are one way for you to assess information online.

**The Information Standard**
The Information Standard is a quality mark commissioned by NHS England. You will find it on a number of printed leaflets, as well as on websites. The Information Standard shows us that the information included on the website has been through a number of checks and proved to be clear,

accurate, up to date and based on evidence. You can find a list of all the organisations that have achieved the Information Standard on their website, along with more information about the scheme https://www.england.nhs.uk/tis/
Look out for the Information Standard quality mark below

![The Information Standard — Health & care information you can trust — Certified Member]

**Health on the Net Foundation**
The Health on the Net Foundation (HON) is another quality mark to look out for. HON is an international, non-governmental organisation renowned for their work to encourage good quality health information.  If you see the HON quality mark on a website, click on it and it will re-direct you to the HON website which will include a code for the original webpage you visited. https://www.hon.ch/
Look for the HON quality mark below.

![HON CODE logo]

# Health information websites

The following websites are recommended for general health and lifestyle information

**NHS Choices http://www.nhs.uk**

NHS Choices provides trustworthy health information which is based on research and evidence. It is funded by the Department of Health and accredited with the Information Standard.
You can find a guide on how to get the most out of NHS Choices on the library website here

![Putting people first — Delivering excellent, accessible healthcare]

If you aren't confident in using computers or being online, Learn My Way have put together video tutorials, including getting around NHS Choices and booking GP appointments online. https://www.learnmyway.com/subjects/improving-your-health-online/

**Patient.co.uk http://www.patient.co.uk**

Patient.co.uk is the UK's leading independent health information website. The website includes over 4000 health leaflets, a wellbeing centre, a free health check and thousands of discussion forums. It is accredited by both the Information Standard and the Health on the Net Foundation.

## Other tips

When you are looking at websites, try to remember the three W's:

**WHO**
Who is the author or publisher of the site and what are their qualifications for providing that information? What are their reasons for publishing the information? For example, are they trying to sell you something? Look at the 'About us' section to find out more about this.
**WHAT**
What is on the site? Does it seem reliable? Is it up to date? Do the authors tell you where the information has come from and whether they have based it on evidence? Look at the last updated information to see how up to date the website is, this is usually found at the bottom of the page. Look for references or links to the evidence, are the links working or are they broken? Too many might indicate that the page isn't being updated.
**WHERE**
Where does the information come from? Depending on where in the world it comes from, the treatment information may not be relevant to the UK. Look at the web address for clues on this, like these for example:

**.au** is Australia, **.de** is Germany, **.ca** is Canada

The web address might also give you clues about what type of organisation produced the information:

**.ac.uk** is an educational site, **.org** is an organisation often a charity, **.gov** is a government site and **.nhs.uk** is a National Health Service website.

Here are two more sites that might help you to assess health information online

Staying Safe online from NHS Choices
http://www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/digital-inclusion/Pages/be-safe-online.aspx

Medline Plus Guide to Healthy Web Surfing
https://medlineplus.gov/healthywebsurfing.html