

# SELECTED RESOURCES

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## Guide to Healthy Web Surfing

*For more information, please call the MaineHealth Learning Resource Centers at 1-866-609-5183*

What should you look for when evaluating the quality of health information on web sites? Here are some suggestions based on our experience.

### Consider the source--Use recognized authorities

Know who is responsible for the content.

- Look for an "about us" page. Check to see who runs the site: is it a branch of the federal government, a non-profit institution, a professional organization, a health system, a commercial organization or an individual.
- There is a big difference between a site that says, "I developed this site after my heart attack" and one that says, "This page on heart attack was developed by health professionals at the American Heart Association."
- Web sites should have a way to contact the organization or webmaster. If the site provides no contact information, or if you can't easily find out who runs the site, use caution.

### Focus on quality--All web sites are not created equal

Does the site have an editorial board? Is the information reviewed before it is posted?

- This information is often on the "about us" page, or it may be under the organization's mission statement, or part of the annual report.
- See if the board members are experts in the subject of the site. For example, a site on osteoporosis whose medical advisory board is composed of attorneys and accountants is not medically authoritative.
- Look for a description of the process of selecting or approving information on the site. It is usually in the "about us" section and may be called "editorial policy" or "selection policy" or "review policy."
- Sometimes the site will have information "about our writers" or "about our authors" instead of an editorial policy. Review this section to find out who has written the information.

### Be a cyberskeptic--Quackery abounds on the Web

Does the site make health claims that seem too good to be true? Does the information use deliberately obscure, "scientific" sounding language? Does it promise quick, dramatic, miraculous results? Is this the only site making these claims?