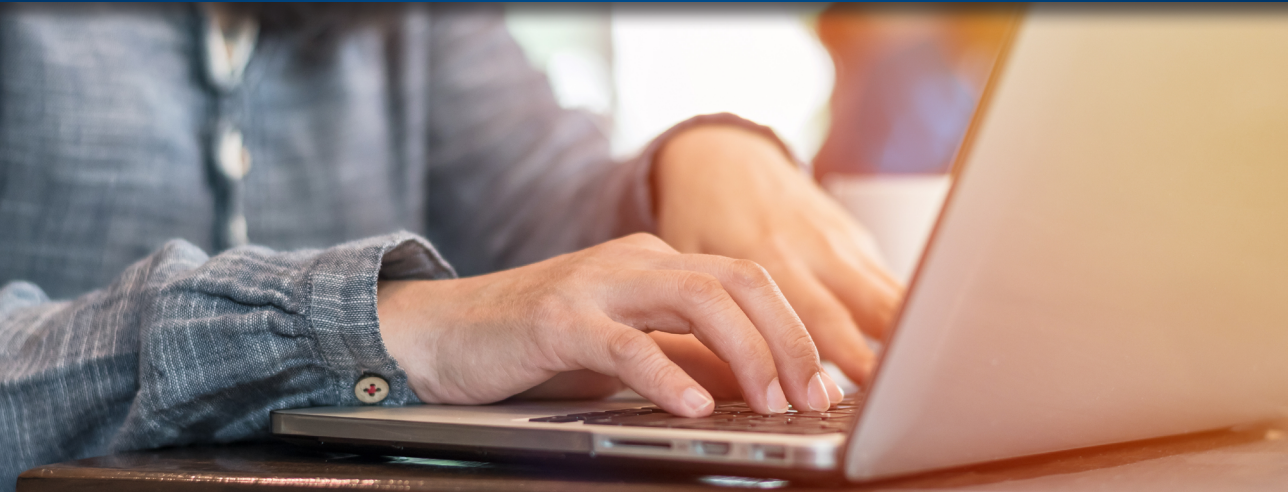# NEAHEALTHTALK

How To Find Reliable Medical Information Online

It is not possible to spot When it comes to using the internet to find medical information, there are an endless number of websites with advice, but how do you know if what you are reading is reliable? When looking for information, ask yourself these questions:

WHO is the information coming from? Any credible website should be very clear about where its information came from. You should look for websites that get their information from qualified professionals (people who are specifically trained in the areas you are researching).

Avoid websites that are not written or reviewed by a medical professional. Steer clear of websites that do not clearly list the source of the "facts" they promote or the statistics they include.

Many websites exist simply to give someone's opinion. If their opinion isn't backed up by quality evidence, proceed with caution!

The most dependable place to find medical information is on websites published by organizations such as medical colleges or universities, government or not-for-profit organizations or large medical organizations.

WHAT is the purpose of the website? Is the purpose of a website to educate or to sell something (also known as a commercial website)? While you can get some useful information from commercial websites, always proceed with caution when the main purpose of a website is to convince you to buy a product.

If the purpose of a website is to provide education, it is more likely to be evidence-based and trustworthy. It is less likely to be biased by people or companies whose primary interest is to make money.

WHEN was the information updated/added? Medicine is a complex and ever-changing field. New discoveries and treatments become available nearly every day. When doing your research, look for medical information that is regularly updated and clearly lists when it was last updated. A good rule of thumb is to look for resources that are no more than 1-2 years old.

HOW does the information line up with what my doctor says? Information you read online may be factual, but cannot possibly predict how a condition relates to your individual health. It is always a good idea to bring any questions about what you read with you to your doctor's visit. This is especially true if you are considering purchasing a product to diagnose, treat or prevent a medical condition.

There are several useful websites out there to find good medical information and your doctor can help steer you in the right direction to do your own research, but here are a few suggestions to get you started: www.familydoctor.org, www.webmd.com, cdc.gov.

If you have questions about finding medical information online, please consult your primary care doctor for reliable sources of information.

Leslye McGrath, MD
NEA Baptist
Paragould Clinic
870-936-7652

NEA BAPTIST

Get Better.