

Finding Reliable Health Information on the Internet

Using the Internet can be a good way to find information. But all the health information you'll find on the Internet may not be correct. The following questions may help you decide whether you can trust health information you find online.

Where does the information come from?

The Web site should clearly show which organization, company or person is responsible for the information.

If a person started the site, the Web site should show whether a company or organization is helping to pay for it. This is known as sponsoring a Web site.

A Web site's address, called a "URL," gives you some of this information.

- **.gov** — The U.S. federal government owns or sponsors this Web site.
- **.edu** — A public or private school owns or sponsors this Web site.
- **.org** — A non-profit organization owns or sponsors this Web site.
- **.com** — A business owns or sponsors this Web site.

What is the purpose of the Web site?

The purpose of the Web site should be easy to find. Usually it is found on the page called "About this Site." If the Web site has advertisements, these should be separate from the health information.

Is the information reviewed before it is posted to the Web site?

The site should include information about the person or people who review the health information before it is posted on the Web site.

Some sites may direct you to other Web sites for information on the same subject. Use these questions to review the linked sites too.

How often is the information updated or reviewed?

Health information on Web sites should be current, including recent research or news. The date that the information was updated or reviewed should be easy to find. It's often listed at the bottom of the page.

What are “social media” Web sites?

Social media Web sites are online ways to connect people. They allow people to display information for others to read or watch and to interact by sharing feedback and comments.

Facebook™, YouTube™ and blogs are examples of social media Web sites.

- **Facebook** lets individuals, companies and organizations share timely updates. It is often used to share information with family and friends who live far away. Mayo Clinic can be found by searching for “Mayo Clinic” at www.facebook.com.
- **YouTube** lets individuals, companies and organizations put videos online for the public to watch. Mayo Clinic has many videos posted at www.youtube.com/user/mayoclinic.
- A **blog** is a Web site that features opinions or news. It may be owned or hosted by an individual, organization or company. Topics vary from personal daily information to specific information about one subject. Readers can share feedback online. Read and share your thoughts about Mayo Clinic at www.sharing.mayoclinic.org.

These Web sites may be helpful

Web sites known to have good health information include the following.*

- Mayo Clinic: www.mayoclinic.com
- MedlinePlus™, a site supported by the National Library of Medicine: www.medlineplus.gov
- Healthfinder™, a site supported by the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services: www.healthfinder.gov

If you have questions about health information you find on the Internet, ask your health care provider about it. Web site information should not be used to identify (diagnose) or treat any medical or mental health condition.

Mayo Clinic does not sponsor or endorse www.MedlinePlus.gov or www.HealthFinder.gov Mayo Clinic cannot guarantee the accuracy of the information on these Web sites.

BARBARA WOODWARD LIPS PATIENT EDUCATION CENTER

Mrs. Lips, a resident of San Antonio, Texas, was a loyal patient of Mayo Clinic for more than 40 years. She was a self-made business leader who significantly expanded her family's activities in oil, gas and ranching, even as she assembled a museum-quality collection of antiques and fine art. She was best known by Mayo staff for her patient advocacy and support.

Upon her death in 1995, Mrs. Lips paid the ultimate compliment by leaving her entire estate to Mayo Clinic. Mrs. Lips had a profound appreciation for the care she received at Mayo Clinic. By naming the Barbara Woodward Lips Patient Education Center, Mayo honors her generosity, her love of learning, her belief in patient empowerment and her dedication to high-quality care.

MAYO CLINIC | 200 First Street SW | Rochester, MN 55905 | mayoclinic.org

©2011 Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research. All rights reserved. MAYO, MAYO CLINIC and the triple-shield Mayo logo are trademarks and service marks of MFMER. | MC2794rev0311