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[Evaluating Cancer Information on the Internet](#) [1]

This section has been reviewed and approved by the [Cancer.Net Editorial Board](#) [2], 08/2015



Listen to the [Cancer.Net Podcast: Evaluating Cancer Treatment Options on the Internet](#) [3], adapted from this content.

The Internet is a useful tool for finding cancer information and connecting with other patients and caregivers. However, sometimes it is hard to know whether the information you are reading is reliable. Because Internet content is not regulated, use good judgment when searching online for information. Be critical about the sources you use. And discuss the information you find with your health care team.

Ask yourself the following questions as you visit websites with cancer information:

Who operates the website? The person or organization that operates the website should be clearly identified on the site. This way, visitors know the source and purpose of the information. Typically, the About Us section will tell you who operates the site. Use this knowledge to judge the material you find on the website.

Who is responsible for the website's content? Reliable websites tell you who edits and approves the content. They also tell you how to contact the organization that operates the website. For example, the [About Us](#) [2] section on Cancer.Net provides a list of Cancer.Net Editorial Board members. It also includes the seal of approval from the [Health on the Net \(HON\) Foundation](#) [4], an organization that created a set of guidelines for health and medical websites. The Cancer.Net [Contact Us](#) [5] link provides phone numbers and email addresses for people to use.

Be careful with information posted in discussion groups or on online bulletin boards. No one may be regularly reviewing or updating this part of the website.

Who funds the website? Sometimes websites present information as fact but are actually promoting a product in return for profit. This is called bias. High-quality websites make it easy to tell the difference between advertisements and medical information. Avoid websites that promote a specific medication or treatment over another.

How does the website maintain your privacy? A website may ask you to give private information, such as your name, address, e-mail, or diagnosis. Before doing so, look for the website's security or privacy policy that explains how this information will be used. Read Cancer.Net's [privacy policy](#) [6].

Where do they get their information? Reliable cancer information is based on scientific fact, not personal feelings or experiences. When learning about treatment options, look for links or references to research studies. If information is based on an opinion, it should be clearly labeled.

How current is the information on the website? Cancer information changes quickly as researchers learn more about different cancer types and create new treatments. As a result, information that is several years old may no longer be correct. Look for a date at the beginning or end of an article to see when it was published or last reviewed.

Does the website have a linking policy? Links may take you to other websites. Be aware that the new website may not have the same standards as the one you left. Some sites will link only to websites that meet specific criteria. But other sites may include links to any website. Read Cancer.Net's [linking policy](#) [7].

What does your doctor say? Discuss the information you find on the Internet with your doctor or another member of your health care team. Your doctor can help you evaluate the information and understand whether it applies to you.

Other suggestions

- Ask your doctor to suggest websites.
- Bookmark the websites you like and check back regularly for new information. Consider signing up for the website's [newsletter](#) [8] or [RSS feed](#) [9]. Or follow trusted organizations on social media outlets to get new information.
- Trust your judgment if something you read does not seem right or seems too good to be true.

More Information

[Don't Be Fooled: How to Protect Yourself from Cancer Treatment Fraud](#) [10]

[Questions to Ask the Doctor](#)

[11]

[Medical News: How to Know If It's Accurate](#) [12]

[Understanding Cancer Research Study Design and How to Evaluate Results](#) [13]

Additional Resources

[U.S. Food and Drug Administration: Beware of Online Cancer Fraud](#) [14]

[Federal Trade Commission: Cancer Treatment Scams](#) [15]

[Quackwatch](#) [16]

Links

- [1] <http://www.cancer.net/research-and-advocacy/introduction-cancer-research/evaluating-cancer-information-internet>
- [2] <http://www.cancer.net/about-us>
- [3] http://www.cancer.net/sites/cancer.net/files/evaluating_cancer_information_on_the_internet.mp3
- [4] <http://www.hon.ch/HONcode/>
- [5] <http://www.cancer.net/node/25104>
- [6] <http://www.cancer.net/node/25319>
- [7] <http://www.cancer.net/node/29716>
- [8] <http://www.cancer.net/publications-and-resources/inside-cancernet>
- [9] <http://www.cancer.net/multimedia/rss-feeds>
- [10] <http://www.cancer.net/node/30951>
- [11] <http://www.cancer.net/node/24958>
- [12] <http://www.cancer.net/node/24593>
- [13] <http://www.cancer.net/node/24719>
- [14] <http://www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm048383.htm>
- [15] <http://www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/0104-cancer-treatment-scams>
- [16] <http://www.quackwatch.com/>