

## Criteria and Tips for Evaluating Health Web Sites

**What type of site is it?** Look at the domains (.gov; .com; .edu; .org; etc.). Is it: Informative/supportive? Trying to persuade you to believe something? Trying to sell you a product? Be critical of .com's. Your safest bets are .org's and .gov's.

**Who writes/reviews the information?** What are their credentials/qualifications? Make sure certified nurses, doctors, social workers, etc. write the information. **If so, it would be stated.** If you cannot find this information do not use the site. Never use personal sites for health information. Remember: If a company writes/funds it, they will most likely want to sell you their product(s).

**Who funds the site?** Are the writer(s)/reviewer(s) and sponsor the same? Is it hard to find that information? Is it not even there? Do the sponsor and the content match? Is there contact information on every page? All support should be clearly identified.

**Is there an "about us" AND/OR "mission statement" located on the main page?** Is it easy to find? Does it match the content of the web site? Is the sponsor of the site a company interested in making money OR an organization wanting to educate?

**Is the site current?** Does the site state when it was copyrighted? Last updated? Does each article have a date when it was written? Active sites are updated weekly/monthly. Remember: be careful to spot automatic clocks.

**Is the site referring mostly to resources that are out-of-state?** Is the organization itself located out-of-state? Is it designed for users in a specific location not relevant to you? If so, avoid.

**Are there lots of links?** Do they work? Do you know who, what, when, where, why BEFORE you click on it? Always go to the direct source if possible.

**Design:** Is the web site hard to search? Can you navigate back to the main page from each page? Is the site more 'artsy' than 'informative'? Are there printer-friendly options?

**Are there lots of advertisements?** Are they flashy? Is it easy to accidentally click-on or confuse them for information? In general, if a site has ads avoid it.

**Are there medical disclaimers?** If there is health information on the site there should be a disclaimer. If not, avoid.

**Do other sites recommend this site?** See [lii.org](http://lii.org) and [caphis.mlanet.org/consumer](http://caphis.mlanet.org/consumer)

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**Search the Holyoke Consumer Health Virtual Library to see if we already have evaluated sites on your topic:** <http://www.holyokehealth.info>

**Bottom Line:** is this site as good as or better than a book (such as the reference shelf we purchased for your site) or MedlinePlus.gov? If not, don't use it!