



This document is part of California's Valued Trust (CVT) educational series

Be Informed. Be Involved.

Know your health care choices.

This informational series is a resource to help you get good quality health care. For more resources, visit our Web site at www.cvtrust.org/resources/beinformedbeinvolved.

How can you know which websites to trust?

If you are looking for health information on the internet, **be very careful about which websites you use.**

- Some websites have reliable, accurate health information for consumers that is backed up by solid medical research. You can trust the information you get from these websites and it can be very helpful.
- But other websites have health information that is *not* trustworthy. Since the internet is not regulated, no one checks to see whether the health information on a website is reliable or not.

To help you find trustworthy health information on websites, this document offers a list of recommended websites. The websites on this list are sponsored by selected government agencies, non-profit organizations, and leading medical centers.



The websites listed in this document are good ones to use for health information, but there are many other websites that also have reliable and accurate health information. **To help learn what to look for in a website,** visit CVT's Web site www.cvtrust.org/resources/beinformedbeinvolved for this document:

- "Finding health information on the internet: A checklist to help you judge which websites to trust."

Recommended U.S. government websites

- **Medline Plus** (www.medlineplus.gov)
Medline Plus is a comprehensive source of health information designed to help answer consumer health questions. It brings together up-to-date information from several government agencies devoted to health care and health research. Run by the National Library of Medicine, this site gives you access to *Medline*, which has publications and summaries from all major medical journals published in the English language.
- **Health Finder** (www.healthfinder.gov)
Health Finder is run by the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It is an on-line health library that looks at treatments for hundreds of different health conditions.
- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** (www.cdc.gov)
This website is run by the federal government's Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (often known as "the CDC"). It has an enormous amount of health information and practical health advice.
- **Agency for Health Care Quality and Research (AHRQ)** (www.ahrq.gov)
This federal agency focuses on medical research to help improve safety and quality of health care. The consumer part of this website has detailed and practical guides to help you get quality care. *Here are a few of the resources at this website:*
 - **Questions are the answer** (<http://www.ahrq.gov/questionsaretheanswer/>)
It has tips on how and why to ask questions of your doctor or other health care provider. It includes a checklist of questions to ask in different situations. You can customize and print your own list of questions to take with you to a medical visit.
 - ***Next steps after diagnosis: finding information and support*** (www.ahrq.gov/consumer/diaginfo.htm)
This guide provides general advice as well as tips and resources to help you learn more about a specific health problem or condition.
 - ***Stay Healthy at Any Age, Your Checklist for Health*** (<http://www.ahrq.gov/clinic/ppipix.htm>)
The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force has used evidence from research to set guidelines for screening tests, preventive medicine, and healthy lifestyle behaviors. These guidelines tell you what you can do to help stay healthy.
 - ***Your Guide to Choosing Quality Health Care*** (<http://www.ahrq.gov/consumer/qntool.htm>)
This guide was developed by the federal Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality to help people make healthcare decisions using information about quality. The guide is based on research about the information people want and need when choosing health plans, doctors, treatments, hospitals, and long-term care.

- **Quality Tools** (www.qualitytools.ahrq.gov)
This set of resources includes tools to address specific diseases and health conditions, recommendations for choosing health care services, resources to help you better communicate with your health care provider, and tools for staying healthy and keeping safe.
- ***Your Medicine: Play it Safe*** (www.ahrq.gov/consumer/safemeds/safemeds.htm)
This guide provides information on how to take medicines safely. It answers questions about getting and taking medicines and has forms that will help you keep track of your health information.
- **Effective Health Care Program** (<http://effectivehealthcare.ahrq.gov>)
The Effective Health Care Program helps people make health care decisions by providing findings from high-quality research. The summary guides for consumers are short, comprehensive summaries of the research reviews.
- ***Having surgery? What you need to know*** (www.ahrq.gov/consumer/surgery/surgery.htm)
This guide is for people who are having non-emergency surgery and can help you understand more about your surgery, including whether it has to be done right away or if it can be done later.
- **Government websites that feature quality comparisons**
You can use these websites to compare the quality of care within a state, county, city, or zip code:
 - For hospital care: www.hospitalcompare.hhs.gov
 - For nursing home care: www.medicare.gov/NHCompare
 - For home health care www.medicare.gov/HHCompare
 - For kidney dialysis facilities: www.Medicare.gov/dialysis
- **Health Care Report Card Compendium** (<http://www.talkingquality.gov/compendium/>)
The Report Card Compendium is a searchable directory of over 200 reports of comparative information on the quality of health plans, hospitals, medical groups, individual physicians, nursing homes, and other providers of care.
- **National Institute of Aging** (www.nia.nih.gov/HealthInformation/Publications)
This website offers numerous informative publications and consumer guides. Although the information on this website is oriented toward older adults, it discusses health problems that often start at much earlier ages.
- **Portion Distortion Quiz** (<http://hp2010.nhlbihin.net/portion/>)
This quiz is on the website of the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute. It shows how portion sizes of some common foods have grown over the years.

Other recommended websites

- **Mayo Clinic** (www.mayoclinic.com)
This website by the Mayo Clinic has a wide variety of health information. You can use this website to look up a disease or health condition and then find out how the disease is treated and what to expect. This website also has a planner for healthy living.
- **Boston Children’s Hospital** (www.childrenshospital.org)
This website has information about how to treat medical conditions that are common in children. It covers how to talk to children about their illness, gives health tips from experts, and tells what children might expect when they go to the hospital.
- **AARP** (www.aarp.org/health or www.aarp.org/health/rx_drugs/)
This website has health information from AARP experts and other sources and provides information about medical conditions, tests, and treatments. One section of this website is about prescription drugs and includes tips on using medications wisely.
- **University of Pittsburgh Medical Center** (www.upmc.com/HealthManagement/)
This website gives reader-friendly information on many health topics, medical conditions, and medications and includes dozens of brochures that you can download and print.
- **Medical Library Association** (www.mlanet.org/resources/userguide.html)
A User’s Guide to Finding and Evaluating Health Information on the Web will help you figure out whether a website has reliable information or not. It also has the librarians’ “top ten” list of health information websites for consumers.
- **Websites with information on medication safety:** (www.talkaboutrx.org and www.bemedwise.org)
These websites are run by the National Council on Patient Information and Education.
- **American College of Surgeons** (www.facs.org/public_info/ppserv.html)
This website includes patient information on a variety of topics related to surgery.
- **The Joint Commission** (www.jointcommission.org/GeneralPublic/Speak+Up)
This website includes the Speak Up™ program, with resources to help patients become better informed and more involved in their own health care.
- **US Cochrane Center Evidence-Based Healthcare Resources** (<http://apps1.jhsph.edu/cochrane/ebhc.htm>)
The Cochrane Collaboration is an international non-profit organization that produces systematic reviews of healthcare interventions. This website provides a list of resources and articles on evidence-based medicine.

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