

FACT or FICTION?

Finding Good Health Information on the Internet

Use the **CRAP** test to check if you can trust what you find on the internet and social media. Talk to your health care team or contact the BC Cancer Library for more information on how to verify information resources. Don't be misinformed!

Currency

How up-to-date is the information?
When was the information published, posted, or last updated?

- Look for a copyright date or the date the information was put on the website.
- It is best to use information that was written in the last five years.
- Links that do not work could mean that the information is old. It could also mean the website is not maintained.

Look out! Words like "miraculous cure" or "all natural" can be false.

Testimonials are not always evidence that something is true or works. They are usually personal opinions.

Reliability *Can you trust the information?*

Are there claims that are too good to be true?
Is the information based on research or opinion?
Are there spelling mistakes? Is a list of sources or references included?

- If a website says "studies show...", it should tell you which studies and when and where these studies were published.
- If you cannot find sources or references, try using a fact-checking website like www.snopes.com.

Authority

Who runs the website? Is there contact information?
Who is the author, publisher or editor? Are they experts on the subject?
Does the website tell you how they choose or approve the information?

- Check the URL which could reveal the type of source (examples: .edu .gov .org. com)
- Words like "editorial board", "editor" or "reviewer" show that the information was likely reviewed by experts

Purpose *Why is the information there?*

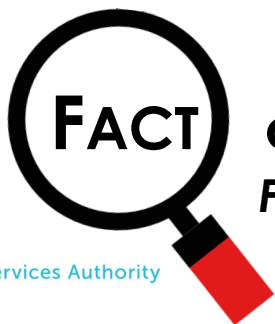
Is the information to persuade? Inform? Teach? Sell? Entertain?
Is there only one point of view or opinion? Beware of bias.
Does the site have a mean or negative tone? Does it attack people who disagree?
Is the site asking for your personal information? If so, why?

- Advertisements are clearly labelled.
- You should not feel pressured or pushed to believe in something.



Disinformation is intentionally created and/or shared false information that is meant to mislead.

Misinformation is information that is unintentionally false and mistakenly shared.



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In addition to using the **CRAP** test, here are some more tips for online books, social media sites, online health news and AI.

Think before you share!



What about ebooks?
It's a book, so it must
be credible, right?

Almost anyone can write a book and share it online. You might have to do some research to check if the author is an expert on this subject.



What about social
media? My friend
sent me a post . . .

Social media, online videos, and information sent to you via instant messaging can be great sources of information from various points of view, but it is crucial to verify and determine the accuracy of this information.

- Use posts from credible organizations health agencies, educational institutions, or professional organizations.
- Be wary of recently created accounts posting this information.
- What evidence does the source provide to support their claims, arguments, and opinions?



What about online
health news for
current information?

News sites can give the most current health information, but you still need to check it for accuracy.

- Does the journalist have experience reporting health news?
- If the news is based on a research study, where was the study first published.
- Other news sources may report on the same study - compare them!



What about ChatGPT
and other AI
sources ?

AI can be a starting point to gather health information, but you still need to check it for accuracy. AI can generate false information. It might cite supporting studies, but these can be made up (hallucinations). AI is also designed to tell you what you want to hear, and it prioritizes this over accuracy.

- Double-check the information with authoritative and trustworthy sources of health information
- If you find information online, discuss it with your doctor to ensure it is safe and appropriate for your specific situation.

Recommended Health & Cancer Websites

- **BC Cancer Library Pathfinders**
www.bccancer.bc.ca/library
- **CAM-Cancer:** www.cam-cancer.org
Evidence-based information on complementary and alternative medicine for cancer.
- **Canadian Cancer Society:** <https://cancer.ca/en/>
Information on types of cancer, decision-making tools, research, and advocacy.
- **MedlinePlus:** www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus
Links to research, clinical trials, definitions, videos and much more.

Evaluating Health Information



Want to learn more?
Contact the BC Cancer
Library for help at
[www.bccancer.bc.ca/
contact](http://www.bccancer.bc.ca/contact), or visit our
**Evaluating Cancer
Information on the Internet**
pathfinder:
[https://
bccancer.libguides.com/
pathfinder-evaluating](https://bccancer.libguides.com/pathfinder-evaluating)