

Web Research Checklist

- **Who runs this site?** The organization's name should be clearly marked on every major page, along with a link to the home page.
- **Who pays for the site?** The source of a website's funding should be readily apparent. The source of funding can affect what content is presented and how.
- **What is the purpose of the site?** This question is related to who runs and pays for the site. An "About This Site" link appears on many sites; use it. The site's purpose will help you evaluate the information's validity.
- **Where does the information come from?** If the person or organization in charge of the site did not create the information, the original source should be clearly labeled.
- **What is the basis of the information?** The site should describe the evidence that the material is based on. Healthcare facts and figures should have references (such as to articles in reputable journals). Also, opinions or advice should be clearly set apart from information that is "evidence-based" (that is, based on research results).
- **How is the information selected?** Is there an editorial board? Do people with excellent professional and scientific qualifications review the material before it is posted?
- **How current is the information?** Websites should be updated on a regular basis, especially ones featuring health information. The most recent update or review date should be clearly posted.
- **How does the site choose links to other sites?** Websites usually have a policy about how they establish links to other sites. Some link to any site that asks, or pays, for a link. Others only link to sites that have met certain criteria.
- **What information about you does the site collect, and why?** Many health websites ask for you to "subscribe" or "become a member." Any credible health site asking for this kind of information should tell you exactly what they will and will not do with it.
- **How does the site manage interactions with visitors?** There should always be a way for you to contact the site owner if you run across problems or have questions or feedback. If the site hosts chat rooms or other online discussion areas, it should tell visitors what the terms of using this service are.



CENTER FOR SPIRITUALITY AND HEALING

AcademicHealthCenter

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA