BC CANCER

Provincial Health Services Authority

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!

C — 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.

STOP

> **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.

R — 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 Snopes: www.snopes.com.

A — 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

P — 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.
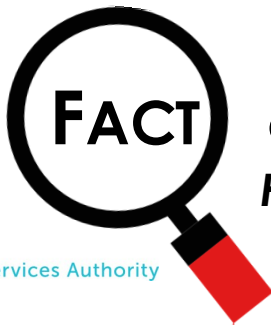
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Usually, doing the **CRAP** test and looking at other sources are good ways to check information. Here are some more tips for online books, social media sites and online health news. *Think before you share!*

> 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 in this subject.

> What about social media? My friend sent me this link on Facebook…

Social media, online videos (eg. YouTube) and information sent to you via instant messaging (like WhatsApp) can be great for sharing different points of view, but this means you might get all sorts of information from many sources.
- Use social media accounts from credible organizations such as health agencies, educational institutions, or professional organizations.
- Use the link from an organization's official website to go to its social media sites.
- Check that accounts are what and who they claim to be. Some social media sites have a symbol that an account has been verified (it is what it claims to be). For example, Twitter gives a blue badge to verified accounts.

> What about online health news? It's the most current information!

News sites can give the most current information on a topic, but you may still need to check the information.
- Does the reporter or journalist have experience reporting health news?
- If the news is based on a research study, check where the study was first published.
- Other news sources may report on the same study - compare them!
- Be careful of stories that sound sensational, or too good to be true (eg. Using words like "breakthrough" or "miracle cure.")

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.
- **Cancer.Net (American Society of Clinical Oncology)**
  www.cancer.net
  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 more information at www.bccancer.bc.ca/contact, or visit the websites below:

- **Media Smarts**
  https://mediasmarts.ca/
- **Evaluating Cancer Information on the Internet**
  https://tinyurl.com/evalcancerinfo
- **Evaluating Health Information**
  www.medlineplus.gov/evaluatinghealthinformation.html
- **Health on the Net:** http://www.hon.ch/HONcode/