[8] Council of Europe model campaign
"Avoid risk for your health"

- http://

If you need Information

The best way to get benefit and to protect from risky offers is to learn how to verify and assess health information on the Internet.
The following topics can help you but this is not an easy job even for experienced cybernauts/searchers.
Health professionals are best placed to help you decide and can also provide you with information sources that match your needs.

Health Information Sources

Licensed physician and pharmacist – reliable sources Health Authority – easy to check source, reliable information

Official Health institutions– easy to check source, most likely reliable information

Medical libraries, academic sources – information mostly in scientific language

- Health professionals' organisations – check within your country first, may use scientific language
- Consumer and Patient Support Associations – likely to use consumer friendly language
- Non-profit institutions – easily checkable if renowned
- Commercial companies – likely to give information only about their own products
- Individually posted information, other sources – difficult to check, could be unreliable

< Check List > *What you should find on the website*

Do you know who is the author?

Identify the name and the professional qualification of the author or the organisation

Check the existence of contact information (complete address)

Does it give reliable, complete and up-to-date information?

Be aware that balanced information must provide both risks and benefits

Look for recent updates or review dates

Check references to original sources

No links to unreliable sites

Cross-check the information with other sources and with your physician or pharmacist

3. Does it satisfy your needs?

- Find out who the information is aimed at (health professionals, commercial agents, general public/consumers).
- Ask yourself if it replies to your questions

4. Does the site refer to a Code of Conduct or display a mark or symbol of quality?

- Mention national codes of conduct, if available
- Apply the checklist to your favourite health websites. See how they score.

Evaluating health information may be time-consuming but it is easy to be alert:

- Ask the right questions
- Use common sense
- Never give any personal data unless you are sure the site complies with security and privacy rules
- Discuss what you find with your doctor or pharmacist

< Suspicious signs >

- Claims of fast, guaranteed or sensational results
- Miraculous cure or secret formulas
- Claims of no risks or absence of information on side effects
- Experts or personal testimonials
- Claims of efficacy for a wide range of conditions or for every person
- Sites without complete address only e-mail indicated
- Aggressive commercial behaviour, e.g. you cannot leave the site
-
- Magic E-mail

Learn about Quality Information Tools < Codes and Symbols >

Check with health authorities in your country about the existence of quality tools such as a seal, accreditation system or other local initiatives.

Medical products and the Internet – a guide to finding reliable information <www.who.int/medicines/library/qsm/who-edm-qsm-99-4/medicines-on-internet-guide.html>

- Health On the Net Foundation <www.hon.ch>
- Internet HealthCare Coalition <www.ihc.net>
- DISCERN <http://www.discern.org.uk>
- MedCIRCLE
- Quality Criteria for Health Related Websites, European Commission communications

Websites offering medicines and/or medical services

AVOID RISKS
OR YOUR HEALTH!

llegal sale settings/Foreign sites

t drugs, illicit drugs, expired drugs, overdosed or under dosed drugs non-approved medicines); waste of money (not reimbursable, not returnable or claimable if defective, restraint in customs).

llegal practices

Be aware: Incorrect diagnosis, insufficient, misleading or wrong counseling, Medicines inappropriate and harmful for your condition, inadequate treatment.

Misleading information

Be aware: Lack of information, biased information, wrong information, products with the same name may be different in different countries

SEEK SAFE MEDICINAL PRODUCTS!

Buy only medicinal products approved by a competent authority!

tion Sources.tif

Quality medicines are dispensed by licensed persons and licensed sale channels, which are controlled by a responsible authority

If you need a prescription or any medical advice be sure to contact a licensed health professional

In some countries medicines may only be sold in licensed pharmacies and they must have the proper marketing authorization. National medicines regulatory authority or the European Medicines Evaluation Agency (EMEA) are responsible for these issues. In order to practice, physicians and pharmacists must be registered in their respective professional societies.

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F - 67075 Strasbourg Cedex
Tel: + 33 (0) 3 88 41 20 00
Fax: + 33 (0) 3 88 41 27 81
http://www.coe.int/T/E/Social_Cohesion/soc-sp/Public_Health/Pharma_and_Medicine/presentation%20pharma.asp#TopOfPage

EMEA:
http://www.emea.eu.int/exlinks/exlinks.htm

Other European regulatory bodies:
http://www.who.int/medicines/information/websites/infdra.shtml

Check the World Health Organisation user guide available at:
http://www.who.int/medicines/library/qsm/who-edm-qsm-99-4/medicines-on-internet-guide.html

Medicines & Internet

The major problems in the field of Medicines and the Internet are the overflow of information and an abundance of risky offers.

To help you with the right choice:

The Council of Europe and [to insert partner] gives *you the following practical tool.*

Check the topics inside.

Internet can be helpful but does not replace the consultation with a health professional.

Don't forget to discuss and share the information obtained from the Internet with your doctor or pharmacist.