

# Best Practices for Evaluating Websites & Web Content

\*adapted from the Medical Library Association's *User Guide to Finding and Assessing Health Information on the Web* <https://www.mlanet.org/page/find-good-health-information>

# UPSTATE

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## Who is sponsoring the website?

Can you easily identify the site sponsor? Sponsorship is important because it helps establish the site as respected and dependable. Does the site list advisory board members or consultants? This may give you further insights on the credibility of information published on the site.

The web address itself can provide additional information about the nature of the site and the sponsor's intent.

- A government agency has .gov in the address.
- An educational institution is indicated by .edu in the address.
- A professional organization such as a scientific or research society will be identified as .org. For example, the [American Cancer Society's](http://www.cancer.org/) website is <http://www.cancer.org/>.
- Commercial sites identified by .com will most often identify the sponsor as a company, for example Merck & Co., the pharmaceutical firm.

What should you know about .com health sites? Commercial sites may represent a specific company or be sponsored by a company using the web for commercial reasons—to sell products. At the same time, many commercial websites have valuable and credible information. Many hospitals have .com in their address. The site should fully disclose the sponsor of the site, including the identities of commercial and noncommercial organizations that have contributed funding, services, or material to the site.

## How often is the site updated?

The site should be updated frequently. Health information changes constantly as new information is learned about diseases and treatments through research and patient care. Websites should reflect the most up-to-date information.

The website should be consistently available, with the date of the latest revision clearly posted. This usually appears at the bottom of the page.

## Does the site present facts and not opinion?

Information should be presented in a clear manner. It should be factual (not opinion) and capable of being verified from a primary information source such as the professional literature, abstracts, or links to other websites.

Information represented as an opinion should be clearly stated and the source should be identified as a qualified professional or organization.

## Who is the intended audience?

The website should clearly state whether the information is intended for the consumer or the health professional.

Many health information websites have two different areas - one for consumers, one for professionals. The design of the site should make selection of one area over the other clear to the user.

# Trusted Websites for Prostate Cancer & Related Information

**MedlinePlus**  
<http://medlineplus.gov>

MedlinePlus is the National Institutes of Health's website for patients and their families and friends. MedlinePlus offers reliable, up-to-date health information. The site is easily searchable, and the search results are reviewed by medical librarians at the National Library of Medicine.  
<https://medlineplus.gov/prostatecancer.html>

**National Cancer Institute (NCI)**  
<http://www.cancer.gov>

Information on prostate cancer from the National Cancer Institute, a component of the National Institute of Health, includes information on: treatments, clinical trials, relevant research, prevention, genetics, causes, and articles available from the PubMed database (a free database of medical articles curated by the National Library of Medicine). <http://www.cancer.gov/types/prostate>

**American Cancer Society**  
<http://www.cancer.org>

The American Cancer Society is a nationwide, community-based non-profit health organization dedicated to eliminating cancer as a major health problem. A detailed guide to prostate cancer includes general information, causes, risk factors, prevention, early detection/diagnosis, treatments, talking with your doctor, "what's new in prostate cancer research?" and other resources and references.  
<http://www.cancer.org/cancer/prostate-cancer.html>

**Clinical Trials**  
<http://clinicaltrials.gov>

ClinicalTrials.gov is a registry and results database of publicly and privately supported clinical studies of human participants conducted around the world.

**American Society of Clinical Oncology**  
<http://www.cancer.net>

Cancer.net is a patient information website from the American Society of Clinical Oncology. Featured topics include: navigating cancer care, coping with cancer, research, and survivorship.  
<https://www.cancer.net/cancer-types/prostate-cancer>

**National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH)**  
<https://nccih.nih.gov/>

The Federal Government's lead agency for scientific research on the diverse medical and health care systems, practices, and products that are not generally considered part of conventional medicine.

**NCCN**  
<http://www.nccn.org>

Not-for-profit alliance of 25 of the world's leading cancer centers, is dedicated to improving the quality, effectiveness, and efficiency of care provided to patients with cancer. Provides translations of the NCCN clinical guidelines, meant to help patients with cancer talk to their physicians about the best treatment options for their disease. <http://www.nccn.org/patients/guidelines/cancers.aspx#prostate>



**Looking for MORE? Contact Sarah Lawler, Clinical Outreach Librarian at 315-464-7192 or [lawlersa@upstate.edu](mailto:lawlersa@upstate.edu) for help.**

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