



# How to find good health information online.

Information for consumers  
August 2021



## Why is good health information important?

Good health information can help you make informed decisions. Relying on incorrect information can put you at risk and be harmful to your health.

There is a lot of health information online and it is not always easy to know what information is reliable, or who you can trust.



## Top tips for finding good health information online

There are things you can do to find good health information online and judge whether it is right for you.



### » **Look for information that is relevant to you**

- Does it answer your questions?
- Is it Australian?
- Does it connect you to local services?

### » **Look for trusted sources**

- Is it written by an expert, or expert organisation?
- Is there evidence for the information?
- Is the information current, and up-to-date?

### » **Look for information you can understand**

- Does it use simple words?
- Does it explain difficult ideas?

### » **Look out for warning signs**

- Does it try to sell you something?
- Does it create a sense of fear or panic?
- Does it only give you one choice or option?
- Does it rely on just one case or experience?

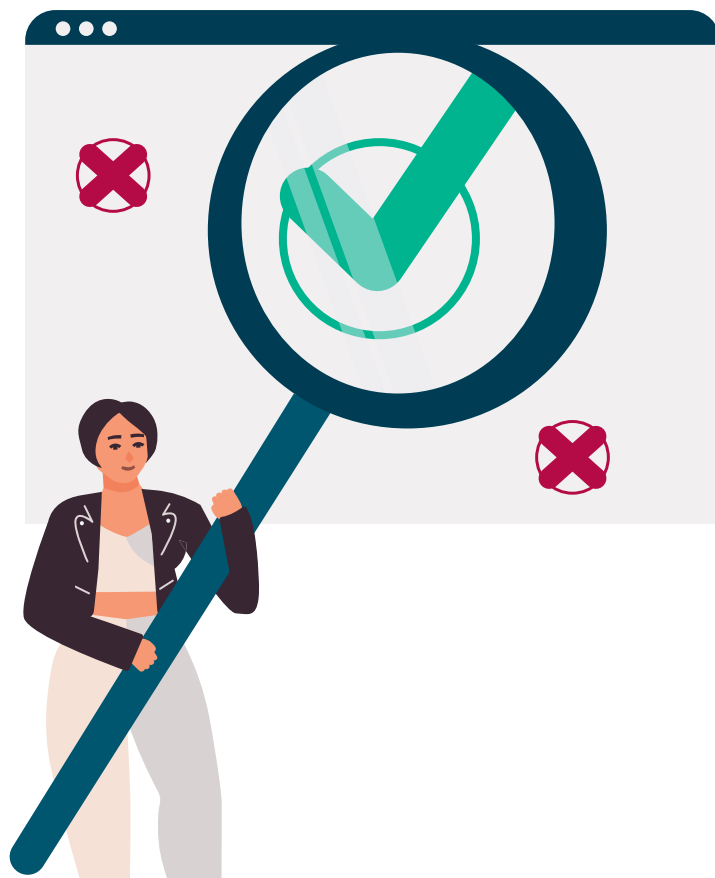
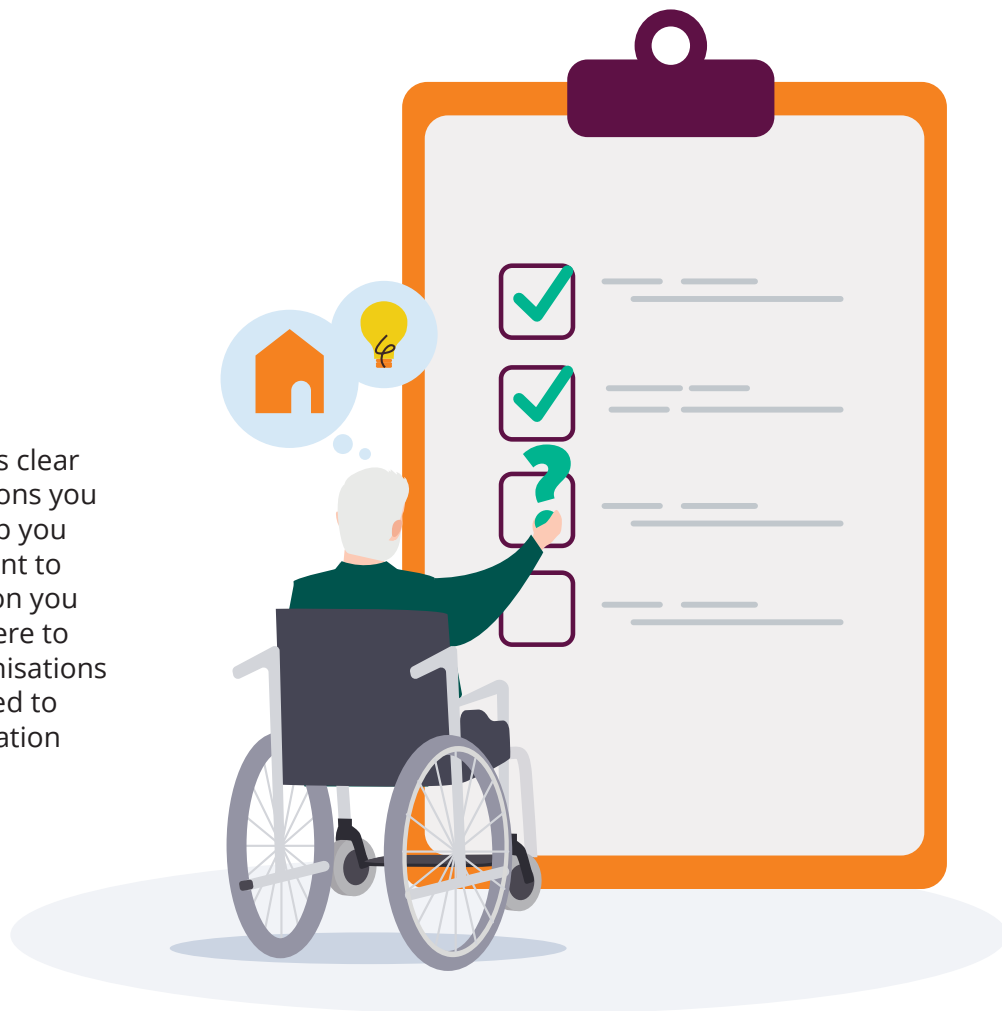
### » **If you connect with people online, remember other people's experiences may not be typical and might be different to yours**

### » **Check the information with your healthcare professional**

### » **Ask for help if you need it to find health information online or judge its quality**

## Tip 1: Look for information that is relevant to you

Before you start looking, be as clear as you can about what questions you need answers to. This will help you find information that is relevant to you. Knowing what information you need can help you decide where to look. Think about which organisations are expert in the area you need to know about and if the information is relevant to where you live.



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## Tip 2: Look for trusted sources

Sources you can trust include the websites of hospitals, condition-specific organisations, state and territory health services, universities and Australian Government agencies such as the Department of Health. These organisations want you to have the best available Australian advice and have processes for checking information is correct. Trusted sources will clearly show the author's qualifications or who the publisher is.

### Tip 3: Look for information that you can understand

Good health information is clear and easy to understand. It will explain difficult concepts or technical information in a way that makes sense to you. It may also suggest where you can find additional information or support.



**LOOK  
OUT**

**YOU ONLY HAVE  
ONE CHOICE**



**BUY THIS  
PRODUCT NOW**



### Tip 4: Look out for warning signs

Good health information should support you to make informed choices about your health and care. Information that promotes a particular product or service, asks you to give personal details, or creates a sense of fear or panic may be false (misinformation) or even created with an intent to mislead you (disinformation). You should not rely on information that only gives you one option, or advice based on one person's experience.

**Tip 5: If you connect with people online, remember other people's experiences may not be typical and might be different to yours**

Connecting with other people who have the same health issue can provide support and information. Remember that the personal experiences you hear or read online may not be typical of what happens to most people.



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**Tip 6: Check the information with your healthcare professional**

Talking about health information with your doctor, asking questions and exploring which options are right for you is important. You have a right to share decisions about your care with your healthcare team and to have the information you need to make informed choices.



## Tip 7: Ask for help if you need it to find health information online or judge its quality

It can be hard to judge whether information online is right for you. You can ask for help to find good health information online. A family member or friend who you trust, a health professional, a health advocate, a librarian or a local consumer organisation may be able to assist.



## Places to find good health information online in Australia



Below are just some examples of places you can find good health information online.

### **Condition-specific organisations**

#### **Arthritis Australia**

Provides support and information to people affected by arthritis. The website has information about arthritis, treatment options, new research and where to find support.

#### **Beyond Blue**

Promotes mental health and wellbeing and supports people experiencing mental health problems and their loved ones. The website has information about mental illness, suicide prevention and where to find support.

#### **Cancer Council Australia**

Provides information and support for people affected by cancer, and also does research. The website has information about cancer and treatment.

#### **Consumers Health Forum of Australia**

The national peak body representing the interests of Australian healthcare consumers. The website has a list of consumer and community health organisations that offer information and support.

#### **Council on Intellectual Disabilities**

Promotes a community where all people with intellectual disability are valued and have the same opportunities as everyone else. The website has information on issues important to people with intellectual disability and their loved ones including health and the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

#### **MyBackPain.org.au**

A partnership between the University of Queensland, Arthritis Australia and the Cochrane Back and Neck Group. It supports people who have back pain, their friends and relatives. The website has information about how to identify and manage back pain.

#### **National Asthma Council Australia**

Aims to support people with asthma and those who wish to learn more about it. The website has information on asthma diagnosis and treatment. It also has links to extra support and resources.

#### **The Heart Foundation**

Aims to increase prevention and awareness of heart disease and support heart-healthy living in the community. The website provides information for people living with, or affected by, cardiovascular-related illness.

## **Australian Government agencies**

### **Cancer Australia**

Aims to reduce the impact of cancer and supports fair outcomes for people affected by cancer. The website has information about cancer management, treatment and research.

### **Department of Health**

Promotes positive health and ageing for Australians. The website has information about different health topics, health programs and health news.

### **Healthdirect**

Provides free health advice for Australians including information about different health topics and medicines. The website has information on patient symptoms and allows you to search for a health service that meet your needs.

### **NPS Medicinewise**

Aims to improve the health of Australians through the safe and wise use of medicines. The website has information on prescription, over-the-counter and complementary medicines.

### **raisingchildren.net.au**

An Australian parenting website for parents and carers of children. The website has information about children's development, communication, health and behaviour.

## **Community language translations**

### **Health Translations**

Aims to support the health and wellbeing of people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in Australia. The website has information about different health conditions and treatments in over 100 community languages.

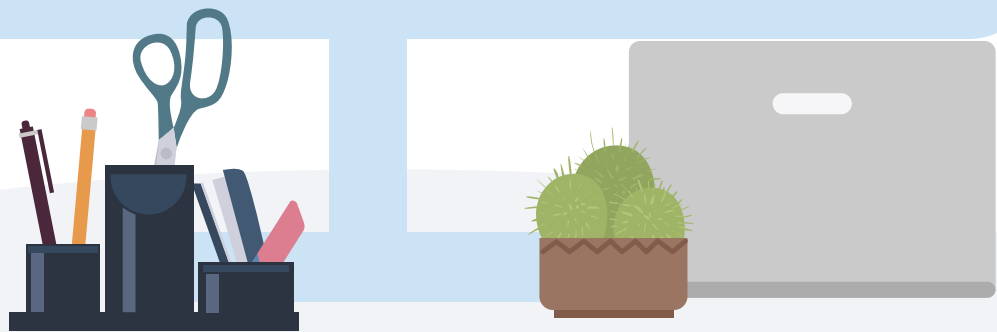




## Information about your healthcare rights and tips for working with your healthcare team

We have published some resources for consumers that you may find useful:

- **Australian Charter of Healthcare Rights**: Describes the rights that you, or someone you care for, can expect including access, safety, respect, partnership, information, privacy and giving feedback.
- **Top Tips for Safe Health Care**: Is designed to help you get the most out of your health care
- **Question Builder**: A free online tool to help you think about the questions you might like to ask your doctor, and to prepare for questions they may ask you when you go to an appointment.



For more information visit [safetyandquality.gov.au/good-health-information](https://safetyandquality.gov.au/good-health-information)

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