

# Tips for Internet Use

The internet can be a good source of reliable and helpful cancer information. But anyone can post on the internet, meaning there is plenty of misinformation and fake medical news, which can be harmful. (See pages in this section with lists of trusted national resources.)

To find credible websites:

- Ask your healthcare team for cancer websites they recommend you check out.
- Look for easy-to-understand information written by healthcare professionals for people with cancer and caregivers.
- The last three letters of a web address (URL) tell you what type of organization it is:
  - .gov sites are governments agencies\*
  - .edu sites are educational institutions like universities and medical schools\*
  - .org sites are usually nonprofit organizations\*
  - .com sites are usually for-profit or commercial companies
- Who sponsors (pays for) the site and its content? Are there lots of ads on the site? Who wrote the content, and what are their credentials? Who approved it? The “About Us” and “Who We Are” pages can provide answers.
- Is the content objective and free of opinion? Some sponsored sites may contain information that is one-sided or biased, especially if they are trying to sell a product.
- Cancer information and treatments change quickly. Look for current information (within the last year or two) written by experts that is factual and evidence-based. It should also cite the medical or scientific research conducted. Find a second source to see if the content is consistent.

*\*Information from this type of website is generally reliable.*

# Online Communities

Online chat rooms, message boards, support groups, and social media platforms can be a great way to share experiences and exchange cancer knowledge and practical tips with others. To maintain your privacy and security:

- Before you join, check what parts of the site are public and what parts are private.
- Use a nickname (not your real name) when you post or create a profile.
- Think twice before providing your phone number, address and other information.
- Be cautious about oversharing or disclosing details that are too personal or could reveal your identity or that of people close to you.
- On the privacy controls page select the proper settings to retain control of your information.
- Check the site’s policies on how they will use and share your personal information. If you are uncomfortable with a site’s practices or the content posted by others, use another site.

**Always discuss with your healthcare team any information or advice you find online from your research or other people.**