Contraception Information on the Internet

The Internet and the World Wide Web have become more and more popular in recent years. Many people now can get to the Web from computers in their homes, workplaces, or schools. Most public libraries also have computers people can use to get on the Web for free. The Web has made getting information on almost any topic easy.

Health on the Web

Many people use the Web to search for health information. Some look for bulletin board sites or "chat rooms" where they can "talk" to others who have the same medical condition. Although some health-related Web sites provide useful information, many contain material or advice that isn't based on medical science. The information might be outdated, incorrect, or it might come from someone who has no professional health care training.

Given these concerns, people should be very careful when looking for health information on the Web. If you plan to search the Web for information on contraception or a related topic, consider the following advice:

- The best place to get contraception information is from your clinician. He or she can discuss all available options, including the benefits and risks as they apply to you. No Web site can do that. Every person has unique health needs.

- If you do go online for information, remember to discuss anything you find with your clinician. He or she can help determine if the material is accurate. Your clinician also can help explain how it relates to other medical data and how it applies to your specific needs. You may want to print information from sites you visit to bring to your clinician.

- Do not provide personal information about your health over the Internet.

- Chat rooms often contain misinformation. Don't rely on them to learn about your health.

- Carefully examine any Web site you visit. Ask yourself several important questions to determine the following:

  **Source:** Who created the site and what is their background? Is the site run by a well-known medical or professional organization?

  **Purpose:** What is the site's purpose? Is it trying to promote a certain point of view or sell a particular product? Does the site contain advertising?

  **Structure:** Is the site organized in an understandable way? Do pictures or graphics help you understand the material and move about the site? Is it easy to find what you're looking for? Does the site contain links to other sources of information? Do the links work?

Note: This material is not under copyright. Feel free to duplicate and distribute to your patients.
Dates: Does each article or page have the date on which it was posted or last updated? Are these dates recent?

Usefulness: Is the site's material written for patients or for medical professionals? Is the information easy to understand? Does it apply to your age group and specific needs?

Try to visit several Web sites so you can compare information on a particular topic. Material should be consistent from one site to another.

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For reliable online information on contraception and reproductive health, visit the following Web sites:

**ARHP Patient Education Site**  
http://www.arhp.org/arhpframedepated.htm  
This patient-oriented site from the Association of Reproductive Health Professionals includes online brochures and information. Two interactive programs on the site can help you test your “contraception IQ” and choose the right birth control method.

**AVSC Contraception Site**  
http://www.avsc.org/contraception/index.htm  
This site provides basic information on reversible and permanent birth control methods, including factors to consider when choosing a contraceptive method.

**FDA Article on Contraception**  
This online article, entitled “Protecting Against Unintended Pregnancy: A Guide to Contraceptive Choices,” is from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

**Healthfinder Women’s Health**  
http://www.healthfinder.gov/justforyou/women/default.htm  
Healthfinder is a government-sponsored health information site that provides publications, links to reliable Web sites, and information about support and self-help groups.

**It’s Your (Sex) Life**  
http://www.itsyoursexlife.com  
This site provides sexual health information for young adults. The information is also useful for parents wanting to address these issues with their teenagers.

**MEDLINEplus Contraception Site**  
This National Library of Medicine site provides information on contraception and links to other respected sites.

**Sex, Etc.**  
http://www.sxetc.org  
This online teen newsletter examines love, sex, relationships, and health.

**Teenwire**  
http://www.teenwire.com  
This teen site from Planned Parenthood Federation of America provides information and news about teen sexuality, sexual health, and relationships.

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**REMEMBER:**  
Accurate information can be a valuable tool, helping you become more involved in your own health care. However, inaccurate or misleading information can be confusing, possibly even harmful. If you use the World Wide Web to find information on reproductive health, be cautious and always discuss your health care needs with your clinician.