

Chapter 1 Lesson 2: What Affects Your Health

Introduction:

One of the factors affecting your health is the messages you receive from the media. The Internet, for example, is an incredibly powerful resource offering thousands of pages' worth of health information. Unfortunately, not all the health information you find online is useful or accurate. To make sure you find valid information, you need to learn how to sort out the useful sites from the not-so-useful ones. The following guide from the National Institutes of Health is a good place to start.

Links to Explore:

MedlinePlus Guide to Healthy Web Surfing

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/healthywebsurfing.html>

Directions:

- Click on the link and read the Medline Plus Guide to Healthy Web Surfing.
 - Then answer the following questions:
1. Where can you look on a Web site to find out who is responsible for the content of the site?
 2. List three warning signs of quackery on the Web.
 3. Why should you be cautious about trusting a site that contains a lot of broken links?
 4. Suppose you find an article online claiming that a drug called Restoramax is the best treatment for arthritis. A note at the bottom of the page says that the site is sponsored by the company that manufactures Restoramax. Should you trust this site as a source? Why or why not?
 5. If you are not sure whether information on a site is accurate, what should you do?
 6. What should you do before making any medical decision based on information you found online?

Answers:

1. On the "about us" page
2. Any three of the following:
 - Claims that a single health product will cure a variety of illnesses
 - Description of a product as a "breakthrough"
 - References to a "secret ingredient"
 - A sensational writing style (e.g., lots of exclamation points)
 - Lots of technical jargon in a site aimed at consumers
3. The broken links are a sign that the site may not be up-to-date.
4. No, because the company is trying to promote its own product, not to provide unbiased information.
5. Consult other sources to see if they give the same information.
6. You should consult with a health professional.

Additional Links to Explore:

Use the links below to gather additional information on the activity topic. When appropriate, have students extend their research to include important concepts contained in these Web sites.

Evaluating Internet Health Information: A Tutorial from the National Library of Medicine

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/webeval/webeval.html>

A User's Guide to Finding and Evaluating Health Info on the Web

<http://www.mlanet.org/resources/userguide.html>