



# Immunization Information on the Internet

*Can you trust what you read?*

You can find current and trustworthy information on the Internet. However, some websites have information that can be misleading. Although they have been designed to look scientific and accurate, their information may not be scientifically valid. How can you know which websites to trust?

*Here are some helpful tips:*

## Check the website's purpose

### A trustworthy website will:

- ✓ clearly state its mission and purpose
- ✓ provide credible health information based on solid scientific research
- ✓ provide information that includes many points of view. Be careful of sites that support a specific cause, group or source of funding.

## Check the website's sponsors

### A trustworthy website will:

- ✓ identify its sponsors. Look for an "About Us" or "About [sponsor's name]" page. The website address (URL) can also help you learn more about them. If the address ends in .edu, it is a school, college or university. Some other common endings are:

*.gc.ca* = Canadian government

*.gov* = United States' government

*.int* = international organizations

*.ca* = Canadian-based sites

*.org* = non-profit organizations

*.com* = commercial sites

- ✓ provide the sponsor's contact information (e-mail, telephone and mailing information). Reputable websites do not hide their identity.

## Check the organizations that support the website

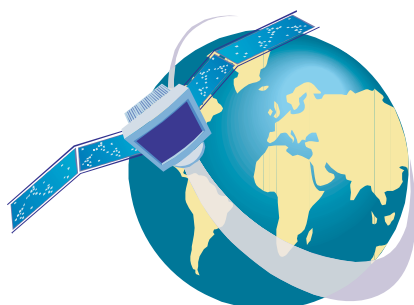
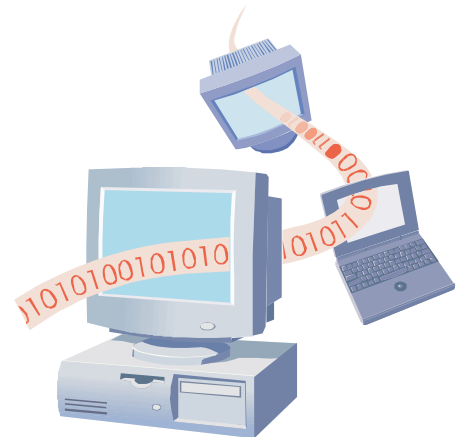
### A trustworthy website will:

- ✓ be endorsed by a health agency or association you can trust
- ✓ present information that covers municipal, regional, national or international concerns, not just the views of a single person
- ✓ indicate if it is part of a network of partners and identify them
- ✓ provide background information about the website's supporters
- ✓ refer to organizations that are responsible for maintaining standards, such as the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (in Canada), or similar organizations in other countries.

## Check to see how the website is maintained

### A trustworthy website will:

- ✓ have experts review the information.
- ✓ post new information on a regular basis. Good websites often give the date when information is posted. Avoid websites with no recent information.



## Check for authors' names on the website

### A trustworthy website will:

- ✓ clearly state the names of authors whose work appears on the website
- ✓ outline the authors' backgrounds and experience in vaccination and immunization. Look for details such as university degrees and professional membership in medical, nursing, scientific or public health associations. Be careful of articles that are written by "world-famous researchers," "well-known scientists" or "noted experts."

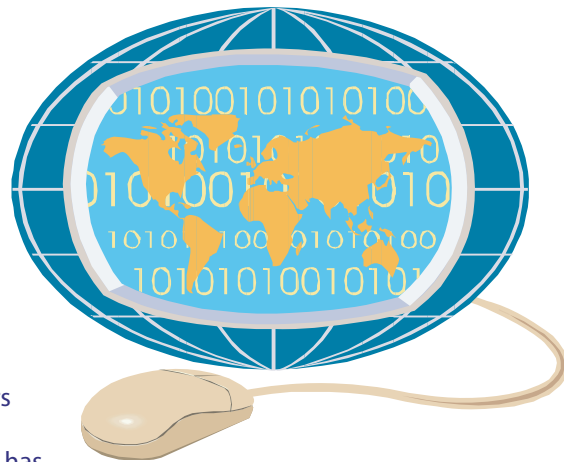
## Check the website's statements and claims

### A trustworthy website will:

- ✓ provide information based on solid scientific research, not on opinion. Sound scientific research is often supported by universities or professional associations and is also subject to peer review (that is, other scientists examine the research to make sure it has used scientific methods).
- ✓ provide references and links to support its statements

### Questions to ask:

- ✓ Do the website's claims seem too good — or too bad — to be true? If so, they likely are.
- ✓ What is the writing style? Avoid sites with grammatical and spelling errors and sensational writing styles (e.g., lots of !!!!).
- ✓ Are the claims based on the idea of a conspiracy? Does the website say it has discovered "the hidden truth" about vaccines? If so, avoid it.
- ✓ Is the information based on emotion rather than scientific fact? Stories about children who became sick or died are hard to read objectively. There is no substitute for scientific study.
- ✓ Is the information based on facts that are tested? Different studies may come to different conclusions. Professional researchers are not afraid to say that further research may be required.
- ✓ Does the website focus on selling books, newsletters or products? If so, its information is likely to be biased.
- ✓ Does the website ask for personal information? Make sure the site's privacy policy clearly states how that information will be used and protected.
- ✓ Does the website discourage you from working with your health care provider? No website can take the place of a cooperative relationship with your health care provider.



## Check the disclaimers

### Some websites:

- ✓ claim that they provide information for "educational purposes" only, and they do not recommend a course of action. If a website is not willing to take responsibility for its advice, why should you trust the advice?
- ✓ take no responsibility for the consequences of their recommendations. Websites you can trust will stand behind the information that they offer.

## Remember, anyone can create a website

- ✓ Be aware that information reported on the Internet or in the media may not be scientifically valid. *Only proper research methods guarantee the information is trustworthy. Always check the source of the information you read.*

## Recommended websites

[www.immunize.ca](http://www.immunize.ca)

[www.caringforkids.cps.ca](http://www.caringforkids.cps.ca)

[www.phac-aspc.gc.ca](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca)

[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

[www.immunizationinfo.org](http://www.immunizationinfo.org)

[www.vaccineinformation.org](http://www.vaccineinformation.org)

[www.who.int/immunization](http://www.who.int/immunization)

Canadian Coalition for Immunization Awareness & Promotion

Canadian Paediatric Society

Public Health Agency of Canada

Your provincial or territorial Ministry of Health website

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (U.S.)

National Network for Immunization Information (U.S.)

Immunization Action Coalition (U.S.)

World Health Organization

Canadian Coalition for  
Immunization Awareness & Promotion

[immunize.ca](http://immunize.ca)

