



VACCINATION INFORMATION ON THE INTERNET

Can you trust what you read?

Many Canadians go to the Internet looking for up-to-date information about vaccination or immunization. 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 the 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:

- ✓ Provide the sponsor's contact information (e-mail, telephone and mailing information). Reputable websites do not hide their identity.
- ✓ Identify its sponsors. If not, the website address (URL) can help you learn more about them. If the address ends in *.edu*, it is a school, college or university. Some other common endings are:

<i>.gc.ca</i>	Canadian government	<i>.ca</i>	Canadian-based sites
<i>.gov</i>	United States' government	<i>.org</i>	non-profit organizations
<i>.int</i>	international organizations	<i>.com</i>	commercial sites



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 sponsors.
- ✓ Refer to organizations that are responsible for maintaining standards, such as the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (in Canada), or organizations like it in other countries.

Check to see how the website is maintained

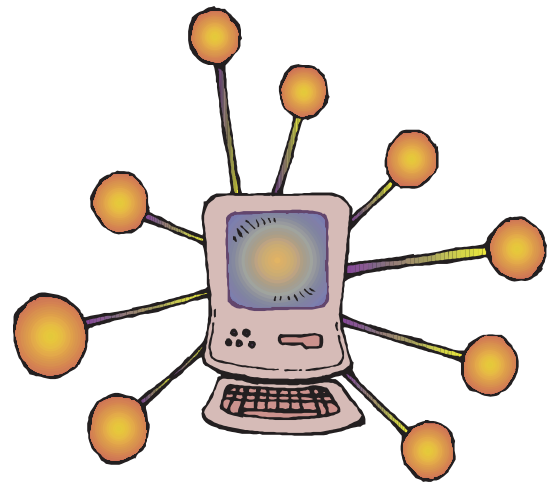
A trustworthy website will:

- ✓ Have experts review the information.
- ✓ Post new information on a regular basis. Good websites often give the date when information is posted. Information in a website's archive may be old. 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. Their background and experience in vaccination or immunization should also be provided. Look for details such as university degrees and professional membership in medical, nursing, scientific or public health associations.
- ✓ Post work by authors who have published articles in established journals. Be careful of articles that are written by “world-famous researchers,” “well-known scientists,” or “noted experts.”



Check who is making statements

A trustworthy website will:

- ✓ Provide information based on solid scientific research, not on opinion. Research is often supported by universities or professional associations and is also subject to peer review (i.e., 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.
- ✓ 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. Even when pain and sickness happen, be aware that 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?

Check the disclaimers

Some websites:

- ✓ Claim they provide information for “educational purposes” only, and that they do not recommend a course of action. If a website is not willing to take responsibility for its advice, why should you?
- ✓ Post information that is incorrect, false or misleading. Then, they take no responsibility for that information. Websites you can trust will stand behind the information 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.cpha.ca

www.caringforkids.cps.ca

www.phac-aspc.gc.ca

www.canadian-health-network.ca

www.cdc.gov

www.immunizationinfo.org

www.immunize.org

www.childrensvaccine.org

www.who.int/vaccines

Canadian Coalition for Immunization Awareness & Promotion

Canadian Paediatric Society

Public Health Agency of Canada,

also see all Provincial/Territorial Ministries of Health

Canadian Health Network

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

National Network for Immunization Information (U.S.)

Immunization Action Coalition (U.S.)

Children's Vaccine Programs (U.S. & international partners)

World Health Organization