Is This Health Information Good for Me?
Steps for Finding and Evaluating Health Information on the Web

Janet G. Schnall, MS, AHIP
University of Washington Health Sciences Libraries
schnall@u.washington.edu

Step 1: Start with MedlinePlus, the best consumer source for medical information.
   medlineplus.gov

Step 2: Try other top rated consumer heath websites.
   1. **Medical Library Association Top 10 Most Useful Consumer Health Websites**
      mlanet.org/resources/medspeak/topten.html
      a. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) A-Z Topics *cdc.gov/az*
      b. FamilyDoctor.org *familydoctor.org*
      c. healthfinder®   *healthfinder.gov*
      d. Kidshealth®   *kidshealth.org*
      e. Mayo Clinic   *mayoclinic.com*
      f. MedlinePlus (English | Spanish)   *medlineplus.gov*
   2. **MyHealth Toolkit**   *healthlinks.washington.edu/myhealth*
   3. **Drug and Herbal information for consumers**
      a. MedlinePlus Drug and Herbal Information
         www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/druginformation.html
      b. Drug Information Portal *druginfo.nlm.nih.gov/drugportal/drugportal.jsp*
   4. **Use eTexts or similar web resources.**
      a. Merck Manual of Medical Information   *www.merckhomeedition.com*
      b. eMedicine   *emedicine.medscape.com*
      c. Health & Wellness Resource Center: Available through the King County Library System and the Seattle Public Library with your library card number.

Step 3: Search PubMed to find more technical journal articles.
   1. PubMed   *pubmed.gov*
      a. PubMed at the UW help page *healthlinks.washington.edu/howto/pubmed*
   2. Open Access journal websites
      a. Biomed Central   *biomedcentral.com*
      b. PubMed Central   *pubmedcentral.gov*

Step 4: Navigate the Web Beyond Basic Google.
   1. Google Advanced Search *www.google.com/advanced_search?hl=en*
   2. Google Scholar *scholar.google.com*

Step 5: Evaluating Health Information on the Web
   1. Use Criteria for Evaluating Websites   *healthlinks.washington.edu/howto/navigating/criteria.pdf*
   2. Determine the type of site by analyzing website addresses
   3. Guides to evaluating health information on the web
      a. MedlinePlus Guide to Healthy Web Surfing
         www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/healthywebsurfing.html
      b. A User's Guide to Finding and Evaluating Health Information on the Web
         www.mlanet.org/resources/userguide.html

April 30, 2010 22nd Annual PKU Science Night   *healthlinks.washington.edu/hsl/liaisons/schnall/pku2010.ppt*
                                                   healthlinks.washington.edu/hsl/liaisons/schnall/pku2010.doc

Criteria for Evaluating Websites

✓ **Authority**

    Is the author clearly identified?
    Are the author's credentials listed?
    Is there an institutional affiliation?
    Does the author have standing in the field?
    Can you easily contact the author for clarification of information?

✓ **Accuracy**

    Is the information accurate?
    Does the site offer a selected list of references?
    Is the source of information clearly stated?
    Is there an explanation of the research method used to gather data?

✓ **Objectivity**

    Is the purpose of the site clearly stated?
    Is the information impartially presented?
    Is sponsorship acknowledged?

✓ **Coverage**

    Does the site satisfy the needs of its intended audience?
    Is the subject coverage comprehensive?
    Does the site offer extra features not available in other formats?

✓ **Currency**

    Is the site current?
    Was the site updated recently?
    Are the links kept up-to-date?

✓ **Design**

    Is the site clearly organized?
    Is there an internal search engine?
    Is the site user friendly?
    Can the site be accessed reliably?

Janet G. Schnall, MS, AHIP
Information Management Librarian
Health Sciences Libraries
University of Washington Box 357155
Seattle, WA 98195
schnall@uw.edu