

Doctor www.

A brief Internet guide for patients

It's hard to overlook the flood of health information available on the Internet. Although it's beneficial to find out as much as possible about your own illness and therapy, how do you know if the information on the World Wide Web is correct, complete or indeed reliable? The following 7 tips will help you find information on medical questions without any "risks or adverse effects".

Transparency

The website operator and/or author of an article on the Internet should always identify themselves. Are you dealing with a trained medical practitioner, an independent author, a chemical company or a health insurance company? Generally, the relevant information is found under headings such as "imprint" or "contact".

Distrust

You should generally distrust any sensational promises of curing/healing, superlatives or unique positioning.

Cross Reference

Always cross reference special medical information against a number of other sources in order to establish possible contrasting opinions.

Relevance

Establish how up-to-date the information is. Pay attention to any publishing dates, author and source details.

Content

The following questions will help you check the quality and reliability of the content:

- Is the information comprehensible and clear?
- Are the suggested therapies described in detail?
- Is there reference to the benefits and disadvantages of the therapy?
- Is there reference to possible alternative examinations and/or treatments?
- Are there details regarding the source of the information?
- Is there reference to other sources?
- Have you answers to all your questions?

Confirmation

If you should find medical information that is unsettling or you would like to consult your doctor about its content, then print out the information and take it with you to your next appointment.

Not an alternative

The Internet can help you find information or prepare you for a doctor's appointment; it cannot, however, replace a consultation with a doctor you trust!

10 healthy Internet addresses

The following Internet pages on the subject of health are suitable sources of information for patients. The illustrated content is by and large factually correct, from a reliable source, well-structured and comprehensible.

General health portals

▶ **www.medicinenet.com**

An independent US health portal that has the consistent cooperation of 70 qualified doctors. Hidden behind its simple and factual design is a veritable feast of information on practically every conceivable illness, symptom, treatment and medicine - including a medical dictionary.

▶ **www.besttreatments.co.uk**

Up-to-date health information for both patients and doctors. The contents are based on the continual examination of new medical research results and studies by 500 medical practitioners worldwide on behalf of the renowned BMJ (British Medical Journal) publishing group. Access only within Great Britain or, alternatively, by using any UK post code.

▶ **www.patient.co.uk**

A recommended privately operated health portal of one of the leading British providers of medical practice software. Contains a databank of 662 items of illness-specific patient information, contact addresses for self-help groups and an excellent list of additional subject-specific web links.

▶ **www.medicdirect.co.uk**

Optically appealing website with everything the patient needs: all sorts of information on illnesses, staying healthy, diagnosis and treatment methods; a list of clinics, medical dictionary, videos, a virtual body tour, and much more. Created and maintained by 26 specialists of the British NHS (National Health Service).

▶ **www.medlineplus.gov**

A service for patients provided by the United States National Library of Medicine. Includes, amongst other things, information on 650 health subjects, prescription and OTC drugs and a medical encyclopaedia. Noteworthy are the interactive tutorials: patient-friendly slide-shows on 165 different medical subjects and procedures, including orthopaedic operations.

▶ **www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au**

Excellent health portal from downunder – provided by the government of the Australian state of Victoria. More than 1,700 contributions on health issues from A to Z, questions and answers, a list of doctors and clinics in Australia and much more. The only handicap: the pages sometimes tend to download rather slowly.

▶ **www.preop.com**

A multi-medial website that is specially aimed at providing pre-operation information to patients - excellent and intuitive navigation. Short animations illustrate the causes of illnesses and individual operation procedures.

Information on orthopaedics and joint replacement

▶ **www.orthoinfo.aaos.org**

First-rate patient information service from the American Association of Orthopaedic Surgeons (AAOS). Simple and clearly structured, this site delivers answers to all questions surrounding orthopaedic surgery in 2 mouse clicks.

▶ **www.orthop.washington.edu**

The website of the Department of Orthopaedics and Sports Medicine at the University of Washington - comprehensive and quality information for interested and highly involved patients. All contributions have details of the author as well as the date of the last update. The site also provides Quick Time movies of operation procedures and physiotherapeutic exercises.

▶ **www.orthopaedics.com**

This Internet site distinguishes itself through its very appealing and patient-friendly interactive presentations on orthopaedic illnesses and corresponding surgical operations.

Dear patient,

Suggestions on the Internet cannot take the place of a consultation with a medical practitioner! Any information you deem important should be printed out and taken with you for discussion at your next appointment with a trusted doctor.