

How do you know that medical advice on the Internet is good advice?

We are used to searching the internet for information and know that some sites are reliable and others not so. Wrong information can cause undue distress or even indicate that everything is OK, when it's not. Can we afford to take a chance with our health and wellbeing.

The good news is that those who offer good quality medical information that is ethical and unbiased is certified to provide that information. It is **Health On the Net Foundation (HON)**.

How do you know it meets the required standard compliance? There is a logo attached to the website that looks like this



Source: Fair use,

and is usually found at the end of the article.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?curid=20669957>

A good example is the Australian **Government Health Direct** website found at

<https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/>

So what does an organisation need to have to obtain HON certification?

The principles of the HONcode are:^[2]

1. **Authority** – information and advice given only by medical professionals with credentials of author/s, or a clear statement if this is not the case
2. **Complementarity** – information and help are to support, not replace, patient-healthcare professional relationships which is the desired means of contact
3. **Confidentiality** – how the site treats personal and non-personal information of readers
4. **Attribution** – references to source of information (URL if available) and when it was last updated
5. **Justifiability** – any treatment, product or service must be supported by balanced, well-referenced scientific information
6. **Transparency of authorship** – contact information, preferably including email addresses, of authors should be available
7. **Transparency of sponsorship** – sources of funding for the site
8. **Honesty** in advertising and editorial policy – details about advertising on the site and clear distinction between advertised and editorial material

What is the bottom line?

Your health and wellbeing is important. Whilst it can be helpful to seek additional information, it needs to be discussed and verified with your trusted GP who is trained to consider the whole of body picture and as necessary undertake a physical examination and conduct appropriate tests.

Be informed and ask questions from your trained GP