



Using Subject Gateways to Locate Reliable Health Websites

If you have used the Internet to find information about health topics, you are not alone. Millions of Americans have done so. Consumers generally say they are concerned about the reliability of the health information they find on the Internet. As a wise consumer, you should be just as critical of internet health information as you are when reading newspapers, magazines or when purchasing products.

Are there sites that have the best information right up front? Subject gateways or directories evaluate websites before linking to them. They point to quality information resources and save time! There are four suggested health information subject gateway websites for Wisconsin consumers. The first three link to quality internet resources while the fourth (BadgerLink) adds full-text databases and a statewide library catalog to internet links.

1. Healthy Wisconsin People <http://www.healthywisconsin.org/>

Links to other health information gateways, provides key national and Wisconsin web resources in ten categories, and links to library resources and support.

2. MEDLINE Plus <http://medlineplus.gov/>

This site is a service of the National Library of Medicine and the National Institutes of Health and selects sites on a basic set of criteria meant to indicate quality.

3. Healthfinder <http://www.healthfinder.gov/>

This site is sponsored by the National Health Information Center at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It connects you with health information provided only by government and non-profit organizations, though a limited number of commercial sites are included if they provide information not available elsewhere. The site selection is based on criteria meant to indicate quality

4. BadgerLink <http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/badgerlink/>

BadgerLink provides access to numerous scholarly journals containing health research. This service is free to Wisconsin citizens. Periodical and newspaper indexes include much full-text. If you have access problems, check with a local public library. Full text databases work only when connected to an Internet server that can limit access to Wisconsin residents. Some Wisconsin public libraries provide a way of accessing via their site, if you have a valid library card.

These four subject gateways to health information provide the best options for reliable information on the internet. However, all wise consumers should remember that anything you read on the Internet should be discussed with a licensed health care provider.

Discussion Questions and Activities:

1. How often do you visit the internet to obtain health information?
2. What is a subject gateway website and why is it so helpful for finding reliable health information on the internet?
3. Pick one of the four health information subject gateways recommended. Take time to review it and share the information with friends and families.