

Searching the Internet for sexual health information



You can find a lot of information on the Internet about sexual health, but not all the information you find can be trusted. So how do you decide if you can trust the information you read on the Internet? This information sheet is about things to look for to help you decide if you can trust the sexual health information you find on the Internet.



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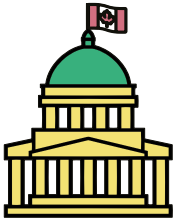
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sieccan
Sex Information & Education Council of Canada
Conseil d'information & d'éducation sexuelles du Canada

Check THE SOURCE of information:

The source of information means the person or group who wrote the information you are reading on a website or on social media.

Here are some examples of sources you can usually trust:



The Canadian government

Look for a website that has “canada.ca” in the link.

For example:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada.html>



A researcher/professor from a university or a research group that is an expert on sexual health

Search on Google or Wikipedia to see if this researcher/professor or research group is an expert on the topic they are writing about.

You can also do a search on Google to find out what other people are saying about this researcher/professor or research group.

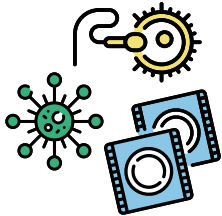
On social media, you can check who is reposting the information. For example, if other universities or researchers are reposting the information, then it is more likely that you can trust the information.

Here are some examples of sources you can usually trust:

An organization that a lot of people know about and does a lot of work on sexual health

Action Canada for Sexual Health & Rights' Sexual Health Information Hub (<https://www.actioncanadashr.org/resources/sexual-health-hub>) is a good place to find sexual health information that is accurate and that you can trust.

You can also look for international, national, provincial/territorial, or local public health organizations. Here are some key words to look for:



- “Canada” or “Canadian” or “national” (for example: Action **Canada** for Sexual Health & Rights)
- Name of Canadian provinces and territories (for example: **Alberta** Health Services)
- Name of Canadian cities or local regions (for example: **Toronto** Public Health)
- “Health” or “Public Health” (for example: Horizon **Health** Network)

Check on Google or Wikipedia for more information about the organization and to see what other people are saying about this organization.

A trusted Canadian news network



For example, CBC News/ICI Radio-Canada, CTV News, Global News.

Making sense of research findings:

Many sources of information will talk about “research findings.”

What to know about research findings:



- Research usually involves a detailed process to make sure research findings are as accurate as possible.



- Research findings are usually about many people’s experiences and not just one person’s experience. A research project that includes a lot of participants from many different backgrounds is more likely to provide information that is relevant to more people.

This means that you are more likely to be able to trust information from research than one person’s personal experience or opinion.

But even sexual health information from research can be understood in different ways. This means that two people reading about the same research finding may not have the same understanding of what that research finding means.

Here are some things you can do to make your own opinion about a research finding:

Find the original research paper:

If an article on a website or a person on social media talks about a research finding, it is usually best to find the original research paper to see exactly what the research paper said.



Sometimes you can find the original research paper by searching on Google Scholar (<https://scholar.google.ca/>). It may be helpful to ask someone to help you find and read the original research paper.

When you find the original research paper, the paper will sometimes include an easier to understand summary of the research findings. This is usually called a “lay abstract” and it is free for anybody to read.

Search for research findings in a trusted science website or magazine



You can search for sexual health information from many known and trusted science websites or magazines by going to this link: <http://www.tiny.cc/sciencesearch>. You can type a sexual health topic you want to learn about in the search bar.

It may be helpful to ask someone to help you do the search.

Check WITH OTHER SOURCES of information:

When you find sexual health information on the Internet, it can be helpful to check with other sources of information to help you make your own opinion about the information you find.

Check with other websites, books, or people



Read articles from many different websites or books. Talk to friends and family. You can also ask someone who knows a lot about the topic like a sexual health educator or a doctor.



If you find the same information on many websites that are written by trusted sources, then it is more likely that you can trust the information. Go to [page 2](#) and [3](#) of this information sheet for examples of trusted sources of information.



People who work in libraries can help you find websites and books about the topic you want to learn about that you can trust.



If you are not sure you can trust a source of information, it can be helpful to ask a few trusted people to help you decide if you can trust the source.

Remember that everyone who writes on the Internet has their own opinions about different topics. Even people from the government, organizations, and universities. Reading or hearing many different opinions from sources you can trust can help you make your own opinion.