



OBTAINING GOOD HEALTHCARE & INFORMATION

Finding Reliable Health Information

Your healthcare team can give you information about stroke, health and caregiving. However, you may still have questions and want more information. You can help your loved one by learning about post-stroke needs.

Where Can You Find Health Information?

Health information is everywhere. People get health information from:

- Healthcare providers
- Friends and family members and their personal stories
- Media stories (newspapers, television and magazines)
- Health reference books
- Web sites
- VA patient educators and librarians

How Should You Get Started on Finding Health Information?

- Write down the topics you want to learn about.
- Are your questions about medical problems? Do you have symptoms you want to look up? Are you looking for tips on caregiving?
- Think about the best source for the information you seek.
- To learn about your loved one's condition, talk to your healthcare team. For general information, look at other sources.

Where Should You Look for Health Information?

Find local information resources – Does your town have a public library? Is there a VA hospital near you? Do you have a computer with an Internet connection?

Ask information experts at libraries and medical centers to help – Tell them what you want to know. Ask for help in using books, journals and computers.

Find a toll-free number for a health organization related to your topic – The federal government lists updated numbers for agencies. Go to <http://www.health.gov>. Find the link to this year's list of "Toll-Free Numbers" for Health Information. Look for an organization on the list that focuses on your topic.

Search trustworthy Internet sites – Ask a provider about a good source of information on your topic. Go to a Web site like MedlinePlus (<http://medlineplus.gov>) or Healthfinder (<http://www.healthfinder.gov>). Click on the list of health topics or enter keywords into a search box. Try different words to find just the information you need. Learn more about these and other Internet sites in the “More Resources” at the end of this fact sheet.

Choose Information Sources with Care

Your friends care about you. But, they are not experts in the healthcare of your loved one. Stories in the news may not apply to your loved one. Always talk to your loved one’s healthcare team about information you find. The team knows details about your loved one’s health. They can explain the information you find.

How Do You Find Good Health Information on the Internet?

The Internet is a popular way to find health information. But this resource should not replace a healthcare provider’s advice.

You should use the Internet to:

- Find out about VA benefits (<http://www.va.gov>)
- Use the tools on the My HealthVet Web site (<http://www.myhealth.va.gov>)
- Find local resources
- Learn more about stroke
- Learn more about caregiving
- Email friends and family with updates about your loved one

You should not use the Internet to:

- Diagnose a health problem
- Change a treatment without talking to a provider
- Buy products that claim to cure health problems (talk to your provider first)

How Can You Tell the Good Web Sites from the Bad Ones?

Not all Web pages offer good advice about health. Some are for-profit sites that try to sell products. Others are government sites. These sites offer trustworthy information. Be picky about the Web sites you use.

A good Web site will tell you:

- The person or group who started the site
- The names and backgrounds of people who write material for the site
- The purpose of the site
- The sources of any facts and figures

For more information on stroke caregiving, visit the RESCUE home page:

<http://www.rorc.research.va.gov/rescue>

- The date it was created or last updated
- How the site uses information you provide

If you find information that sounds too good to be true, it probably is. Be sure to talk to a provider about what you find. Ask questions. Report false or misleading health information to the Federal Trade Commission. The “More Resources” section at the end of this fact sheet has contact information on the Federal Trade Commission.

Use this checklist to ask some questions about the site:

Provider	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Who is in charge of the Web site? ○ Why are they providing the site? ○ Can you contact them? 	<input type="checkbox"/>
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Where does the money to support the site come from? ○ Does the site have advertisements? Are they labeled? 	<input type="checkbox"/>
Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Where does the information on the site come from? ○ How is content selected? ○ Do experts review the information that goes on the site? ○ Does the site avoid unbelievable or emotional claims? ○ Is it up-to-date? 	<input type="checkbox"/>
Privacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Does the site ask for your personal information? ○ Do they tell you how it will be used? ○ Are you comfortable with how it will be used? 	<input type="checkbox"/>

(adapted from http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/images/webeval_checklist.jpg)

Remember

- You can help your loved one by learning about stroke.
- Talk to your healthcare team about information you find on the Internet. Team members know your loved one’s specific health needs.
- Never change medicines, diets or any other health treatment without asking your provider. Information from your friends, in the news or on the Internet may not be accurate.

More Resources

The following resources contain internet links. The location of internet pages can change. Therefore the links provided may not always work. For the most current version of this list, go to <http://www.rorc.research.va.gov/rescue/resources>. This page will be updated frequently.

Link Disclaimer: Links to information and Web sites outside of the Department of Veterans Affairs do not indicate an endorsement of products or services offered by the sites. In addition, these sites may have privacy and security policies that are inconsistent with those of VA.

American Stroke Association

Web: <http://www.strokeassociation.org>

Phone: 1-888-478-7653

The American Stroke Association has tools to identify hospitals, rehabilitation facilities and healthcare professionals that provide quality care.

- Click on “Learn About Stroke”
- Click on “Receiving Quality Care”

Department of Veterans Affairs

Web: <http://www.va.gov>

Find out more about VA health benefits and the types of care available to Veterans.

- Click on “Veteran Services” on the top bar
- Click on “Health Care”

Federal Trade Commission

Web: <http://www.ftccomplaintassistant.gov>

Report false or misleading health information to the Federal Trade Commission. Information also available in Spanish.

Health.gov

Web: <http://www.health.gov>

Health.gov is a portal to other government health sites. It also has a list of the most recent toll-free numbers for various health organizations.

Healthfinder

Web: <http://www.healthfinder.gov>

Email: healthfinder@nhic.org

Healthfinder has helpful tools such as a health encyclopedia and quick guides to healthy living. Information also available in Spanish.

MedlinePlus

Web: <http://www.medlineplus.gov>

MedlinePlus has guides on finding reliable health information on the internet. Information also available in Spanish.

“Evaluating Internet Health Information: A Tutorial from The National Library of Medicine”

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/webeval/webeval.html>

“MedlinePlus Guide to Healthy Web Surfing”

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/healthywebsurfing.html>

My HealthVet (MHV)

Web: <http://www.myhealth.va.gov>

My HealthVet (MHV) provides trusted information on stroke and other health conditions. It also provides resources for stroke caregivers and tools to track your loved one’s health.

Also visit the Caregiver Assistance Center on the My HealthVet Web site. This section provides more information on caregiving.

- Go to: <http://www.myhealth.va.gov>
- Click on the button that says “Enter Here”
- Click on “Research Health” on the top bar, then “Healthy Living Centers”
- Click on “Caregiver Assistance”

National Institute on Aging (NIA)

Web: <http://www.nia.nih.gov>

Phone: 1-800-222-4225

The National Institute on Aging has guides on obtaining good healthcare and information. Information also available in Spanish.

"Beware of Health Scams"

<http://www.nia.nih.gov/healthinformation/publications/quackery.htm>

“Online Health Information: Can You Trust It?”

<http://www.nia.nih.gov/healthinformation/publications/onlinehealth.htm>

“Talking with Your Doctor: A Guide for Older People”

<http://www.nia.nih.gov/healthinformation/publications/talkingwithyourdoctor>

National Stroke Association

Web: <http://www.stroke.org>

Phone: 1-800-787-6537

The National Stroke Association has detailed information on stroke, from prevention to recovery.



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