

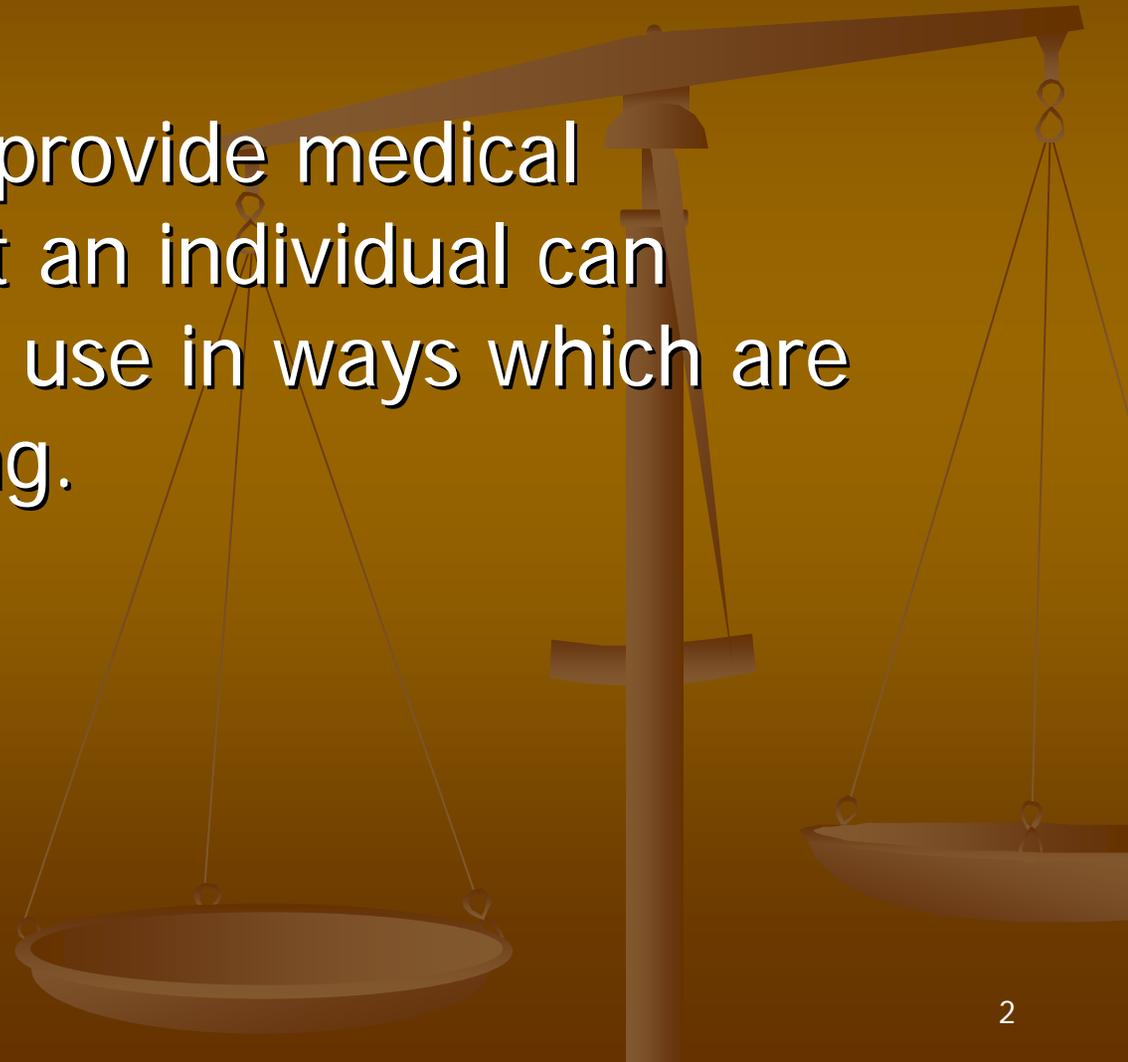
# Consumer Health Resources:

Empowering You To Take Charge of Your Health!

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# What are Consumer Health Resources?

Resources that provide medical information that an individual can understand and use in ways which are health enhancing.



# Why should I know about Consumer Health Resources?

- Empower you to **DECIDE**:
  - When to go to a healthcare provider
  - Who you will go to
  - What choices are available to you
  - What care, treatments you want
  - When you need a second opinion

# Where is Consumer Health Information?

- Books
- Magazines/Newspapers
- Radio/TV
- Telephone Hotlines
- Videos/DVD's
- Billboards
- Internet
- People



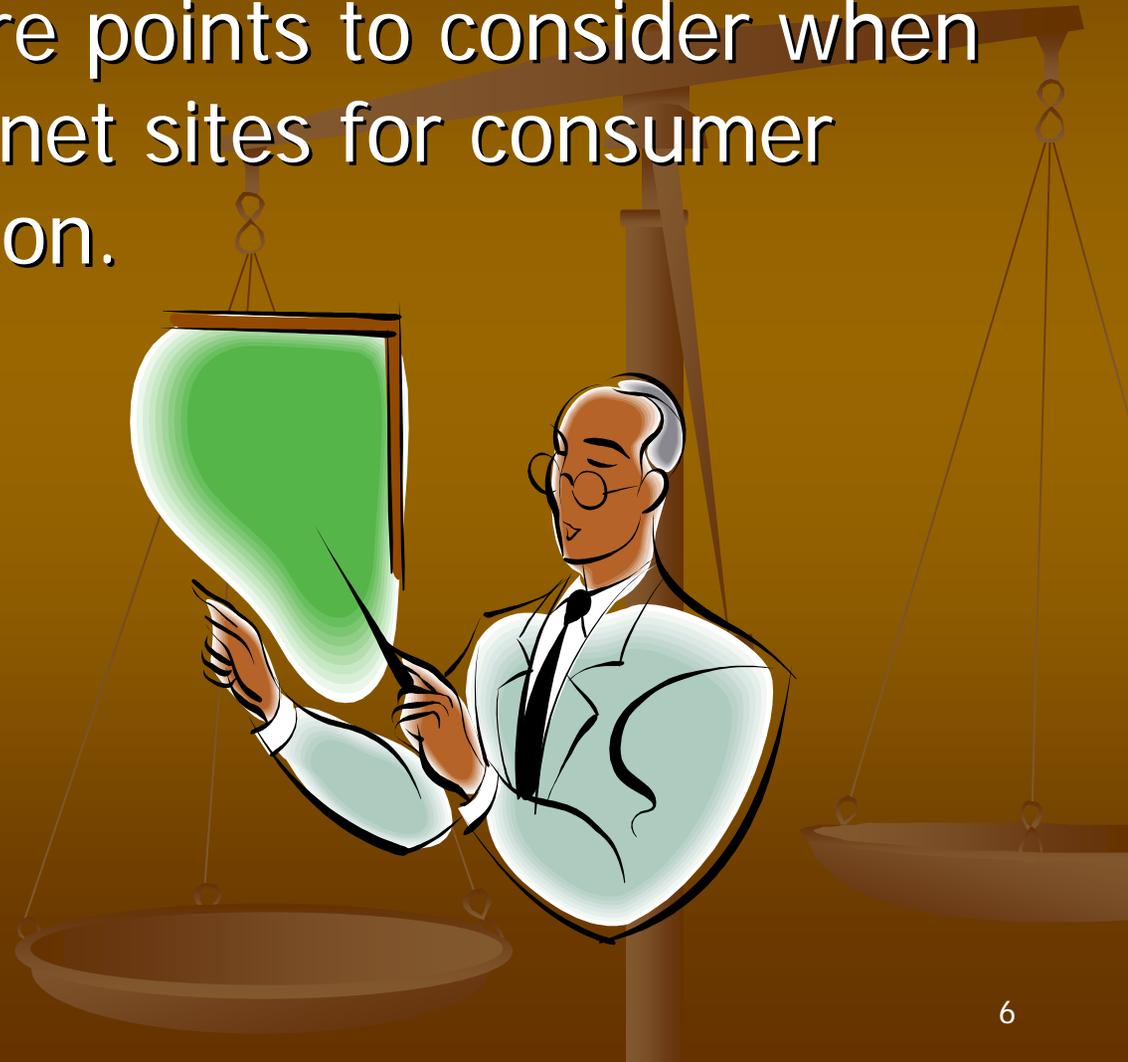
# Who provides Consumer Health Information?

- Librarians
- Doctors
- Nurses
- Pharmacists
- Dentists
- Optometrists
- Community Health Educators
- Physical Therapists
- Hospital Web Sites
- And others



# How do I judge what's out there?

- The following are points to consider when consulting Internet sites for consumer health information.



# 1. Who runs the site?

- Any good health-related web site should make it easy for you to learn who is responsible for this site and its information.
- Is this information clearly stated on the site's main page or is there an easy to find link to this information?

# Who runs the site? (cont'd)

- Are credentials given for the person(s) in charge of the site? Is the person a physician, a researcher, a group or someone with a personal interest in the topic?
- Is an individual's name and e-mail address given so that you can ask questions about the site?



## 2. Who pays for the site?

- It costs money to run a Web site. The source of a web site's funding should be clearly stated or readily apparent. Web addresses ending in "org" denote an organization's site.
- The source of funding can affect what content is presented, how the content is presented, and what the site owners want to accomplish on the site.

### 3. What is the purpose of the site?

- This question is related to who runs and pays for the site. An “About This Site” link appears on many sites; if it’s there, use it.
- The purpose of the site should be clearly stated and should help you evaluate the trustworthiness of the information.



# 4. Where does the information come from?

- Many health/medical sites post information collected from other Web sites of sources. If the person or organization in charge of the site did not create the information, the original source should be clearly labeled.



## 5. What is the basis of the information?

- Along with identifying who wrote the material you are reading, the site should describe the evidence that the material is based on.
- Rely on medical research (Facts, Figures) not opinion
- Does the site identify the author? Look for the author of the information. Good examples are "Written by John Smith, R.N.," or "Copyright 2003, American Cancer Society."
- If there are case histories or testimonials, look for contact information e.g. e-mail address, or phone number.

## 6. How is the information selected?

- Look for a description of the process of selecting or approving information on this site. It is in the "About Us" section and may be called "editorial policy", "selection policy", or "review policy".
- Sometimes the site will have information "about our authors" or "about our writers" or a link under the individuals name and or credentials instead of an editorial policy

# 7. How current is the information?

- Is the information reviewed and updated regularly. (It is particularly important that medical information be current.) Are individual articles signed and dated? If dates are given, what do they mean?
- Look for dates on documents. A document on coping with the loss of a loved one need not be current, but a document on the latest treatment for AIDS needs to be current.
- Are external links to other sites updated frequently or are there dead links?

## 8. How does the site choose to link to other sites?

- Web sites usually have a policy about how they link to other sites. Some medical sites take a conservative approach and don't link to any other sites. Some link to any site that asks, or pays, for a link.
- Others only link to sites that have met certain criteria.

## 9. What information about you does the site collect, and why?

- Does the site have a privacy policy and tell you what information they collect?
- There should be a link saying “Privacy” or “Privacy Policy.” read this to see if your privacy is really being protected. For example, if the site says “We share information with companies that can provide you with useful products,” then your information isn’t private.



# What information does the site...(cont'd)

- Web sites routinely track the paths visitors take through their sites to determine what pages are being used. Many health web sites ask you to “subscribe” to or “become a member.” This will give the site personal information about you.
- If you must provide personal information (name, date of birth, gender, mother’s maiden name, credit card number) you should refer to the privacy policy to see what they can do with your information.

# 10. Is the site easy to navigate?

- Are menus arranged logically? Is it easy to determine from the main page what's available on the site?
- If the site has multiple links or features, is there a site map or shared border that lays out exactly what's included?
- Is the entire site searchable?
- Is the site easy to navigate?

