

Why talk to my pharmacist about the Internet?

In a pharmacy, you have easy access to your pharmacist, who is the drug expert of the health care system and, as such, has a unique knowledge of medications and their interactions with each other, food, alcohol, disease and lifestyle, as well as their effects on the human body. Your pharmacist is also reasonably computer literate because pharmacies rely heavily on computers. Your pharmacist is in the best position to help you assess and apply health information you have found on the Internet.

Is your pharmacy online?

Many pharmacies have their own web sites that provide helpful information, and some offer the opportunity to purchase products online. Check with your pharmacy to see if it has such a site. Also, if you are an e-mail user, ask if your pharmacy has an e-mail address and whether it welcomes e-mailed questions.

Remember, by not going to the pharmacy, you miss the opportunity to consult with your pharmacist about your medications and health.

The Internet can be an invaluable source of health information if you use it properly.

More about your pharmacist

Your Pharmacist

- is a licenced health care professional with a minimum of 4 to 5 years of university training and practical experience
- is a medication expert and the right health professional to help you get the best from your medicine
- is an expert resource for you, your doctor, your nurse and other health professionals
- keeps a computer record of all your prescription medications and checks your prescription to make sure the drug, dose and instructions are best for you.

Pharmacists practise in many settings:

- community pharmacies (drug stores)
- hospitals
- nursing homes
- universities
- pharmaceutical companies
- governments.

Your health checklist

Your pharmacist can help you make the best choices for your health. Here are a few other important steps you can take to help you enjoy better health:

- Choose a pharmacy that meets your needs and continue to use that pharmacy.
- Take your medications as directed.
- Keep your pharmacist up to date on any prescription, nonprescription or herbal or natural health products you are taking.
- Talk to your pharmacist if you are unsure about how to take or store your medications or if you are having any problems with your medications.
- Ask your pharmacist to help you select nonprescription medications.



Your pharmacist can help you make the best choices for your health.
Have you talked with your pharmacist lately?

Compliments of your pharmacist



and ...



Canadian Association of Chain Drug Stores



Canadian Association of Pharmacy Students and Interns



Canadian Pharmacists Association

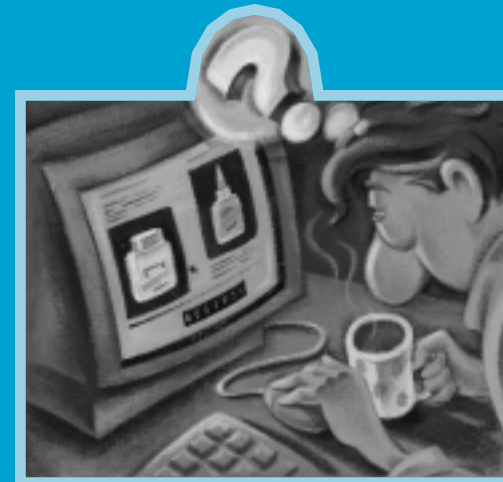


Canadian Society of Hospital Pharmacists

Visit our web sites:

CAPSI: come.to/capsi **CPhA:** cdnpharm.ca
CSHP: cshp.ca

Looking for Health Answers Online?



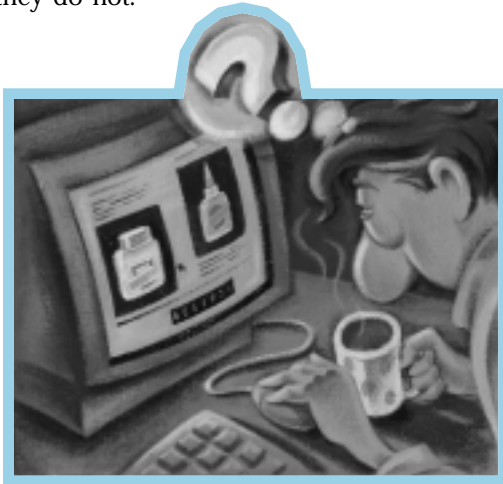
Talk to Your Pharmacist

Looking for health answers online?

The World Wide Web is expanding at an incredible rate.

If you are like a growing number of Canadians, you are going online to look for answers to your questions about your health. You should be aware of pros and cons to this trend when you are seeking information online.

One “pro” is that the Internet can help informed patients make good decisions about their health. A “con” is that often a little information can be a dangerous thing. An Internet site may not necessarily contain all the information required to make an informed decision; people may think they know enough to self-treat when, in fact, they do not.



The best advice: find the information online, but then confirm it in person. Talk to your pharmacist or other health care professional before you make a decision that will affect your health.

Act responsibly: use caution

Before you act on information you have found on the Internet, ask yourself the following questions:

- ? Is the web site and its information reliable?
- ? Do I really understand the information?
- ? What should I do with it?
- ? Am I certain that the information does not come from a site that is making a “sales” pitch; whose main objective is not to educate but to promote a specific product?
- ? Can I use the information to help me choose the right nonprescription product for my condition?
- ? How can I be sure I am making the right decisions about my health based on this information?
- ? If I make a wrong decision and take a product that causes bad side effects, are they reversible or might they permanently damage my health?

Even if a web site is reputable and provides solid, accurate information, you may still need further information or explanation based on analysis of the information and how it relates to your personal situation — your general health, what disease or conditions you have and what medications you are taking. That’s where your pharmacist can help.

A few general rules for finding health answers online:

- Stick to reliable web sites when searching for information. In 1999 the Government of Canada launched the Canada Health Network (CHN), whose goal is to provide links to health information on the Internet that meets minimum criteria, as set by the Network. Go to www.canadian-health-network.ca and you will be guided through the steps to link with more than 5000 (and growing) Internet-based resources.
- Print and bring along a copy of any information you feel is useful when you visit your pharmacist or doctor.
- Never replace face-to-face contact with your health care provider with information from the Internet. Instead, use the information to enhance the relationship you share with your pharmacist, doctor, nurse or other health care provider.
- If you are searching for information about a disease or condition with which you have recently been diagnosed, you might have a certain degree of emotion about your situation and your judgement may be clouded. Seek an impartial yet informed second opinion — discuss it with your pharmacist.
- Never pressure your doctor to write a prescription for something you read about on the Internet. Rather, discuss the matter with your doctor, pharmacist or nurse.
- If you are a “hard-core net surfer,” work with health care practitioners who share your enthusiasm for the Internet. The best health care comes from a relationship of trust and mutual respect between you and your pharmacist, doctor, nurse or other practitioner. Even if they don’t agree with you, your caregivers should support your efforts to take an active role in your own health care.

Caveat emptor (“Consumer Beware”)

At any moment, you can go online and order prescription drugs (without a prescription), experimental drugs that otherwise would not be available to you in Canada, and all kinds of “miracle cures” or “scientific breakthroughs” with “no side effects” made with all kinds of “secret ingredients.”



Beware of claims that seem too good to be true.

The Internet presents a whole new world that is very difficult to regulate. Although the lack of regulation gives you more freedom of choice, it also gives individuals the freedom to offer products and information without regard for the safety standards that we enjoy in Canada.

Mixed with the snippets of good information may be bogus claims and substandard products.

Now more than ever, you need someone you can go to for health care advice and support. Your pharmacist can help you sort through the surplus of health information.

Talk to your pharmacist.