

The Health Column by Evelyn E. Ames

Many of you have computers and go on line to search for information relating to various health-related issues. This month's column identifies several websites that are reliable, scientifically accurate, current, and easily navigable. Brief descriptions highlight main topics found at each site.

CDC: (www.cdc.gov) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, one of 13 major operating components of the Department of Health and Human Services (www.hhs.gov), is the principal agency in the United States government established to protect the health and safety of all Americans and to provide essential human services. CDC is an excellent source for statistics and up-to-date information. The left column at the home page of CDC lists the following under *Health & Safety Topics*: Birth Defects; Disabilities; Diseases & Conditions; Emergency Preparedness & Response; Environmental Health; Genetics and Genomics; Health Promotion; Injury and Violence; Travelers' Health; Vaccines & Immunizations; Workplace Safety & Health. If you are considering traveling outside of North America, you can find latest information on methods and means for preventing infectious diseases such as malaria, dengue fever, and hepatitis A.

NIH: (www.nih.gov) Home page of the National Institutes of Health. Two areas to explore are "Health Information" (at this site you can subscribe to the *Weekly Health Information Newsletter*) and "News and Events." Important is the sub heading "Institutes." This is a listing of all the institutes (such as [National Human Genome Research Institute](http://www.nhgri.nih.gov), [National Institute on Aging](http://www.nia.nih.gov), [National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases](http://www.niaid.nih.gov), National Institute on Drug Abuse, National Institute on Mental Health, National Eye Institute, and National Cancer Institute.

<http://www.niapublications.org/agepages/> (NIA, one of the 27 Institutes and Centers of NIH, leads a broad scientific effort to understand the nature of aging and to extend the healthy, active years of life.

<http://www.nia.nih.gov/HealthInformation/Publications/> (gets you the age pages). Learn about a popular booklet, *Talking with Your Doctor*, that provides helpful worksheets, and offers tips/suggestions such as choosing a doctor you can talk to, getting ready for appointment, giving and getting information, discussing sensitive subjects, and Involving family and friends.

<http://www.niaid.nih.gov>, click on facts sheets and "The Common Cold" and obtain detail information.

Health Care Delivery System:

Want to know how your local hospital and physicians are doing, check www.healthgrades.com?

http://www.healthgrades.com/consumer/index.cfm?fuseaction=homepage&tv_eng=CJ&tv_kw=DoctorQualityReports&AID=10285061&PID=1543220

Want a list of questions to check for quality of providers (www.ahcpr.gov/consumer/quick.htm)?

Want healthful tips for checking health insurance (www.ahcpr.gov/consumer/insurance.htm)?

Quick checks for quality: <http://www.ahcpr.gov/consumer/qualguid/pdf>

Pursuing Perfection at St. Joseph Hospital: www.hinet.org/chic/PursuingPerfectionWeb

Questions to ask your doctor before surgery: <http://ahcpr.gov/consumer/surgery.htm>

Alternative providers and services: pros and cons; scientific evidence to support or refute efficacy; web site is <http://www.nih.cam.gov>

Shared Care Plan is a free personal health record available online. Allows one to keep track of health information and to share information with physicians and family. Go to www.SharedCarePlan.org.

Food Quality and Safety:

Lists of additives: <http://www.cspinet.org/reports/chemcuisine.htm#Food>, which is the Center for Science in the Public Interest (<http://www.cspinet.org>) and www.cfsan.fda.gov/list.html.

Food quality and safety; food contamination; food labeling; "functional foods." Bio-engineered foods. food irradiation; food additives. Food and Drug Administration as www.fda.gov/

Food borne illnesses (e.g. salmonellosis, clostridium perfringens, listeriosis, botulism, staphylococcal food illness, and campylobacter). Check "Bad Bug Book" at: <http://vm.cfsan.fda.gov/~mow/intro.html>. and foodborne pathogens at <http://vm.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/qa-fdb13.html>.

USDA (Dept. of Agriculture) at www.usda.gov. You can compare the food pyramids at both the USDA and FDA.

Herbals and Dietary Supplements: separating fact from fiction. web site: <http://www.nutrition.gov>

Personal Safety/Injury Prevention:

Safety indoors (e.g., halogen lamps and candles). Consumer Product Safety Commission at <http://www.cpsc.gov/search.html>. This government site is charged with

Noise pollution: occupational and home noise; effects on health; noise induced hearing loss; testing decibel levels. Check http://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/pubs_hb/noise.htm as well as

http://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/pubs_hb/ruler.htm & http://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/pubs_hb/older.htm

Indoor air pollutants): effects on health; making your home more comfortable and safer. Northwest Air Pollution Authority: <http://www.nwair.org>

Toxic substances in our environment; pesticides and insecticides; lead; arsenic, mercury. For details about many substances, go to web site: <http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/cxcx3.html> Describes top 20 hazardous substances in detail and there are links to other sites that describe toxic agents.

Wisely choosing OTC drugs; interactions with prescription drugs:

<http://www.fda.gov/cder/consumerinfo/WhatsRightForYou.htm>.

Sense in the sun! Spring and summer are approaching and so is the sun. For information about ultraviolet (both A and B) rays and protection during the day:

Check out CBC Marketplace (Canadian) for such issues as recent carcinogens in cosmetics and recalls of hazardous products at <http://www.cbc.ca/consumers/market> and the index at <http://www.cbc.ca/consumers/market/index.html>

Health Fraud and Quackery

National Council for Reliable Information: Clues for identifying. Who is most vulnerable and why? Questions the consumer should be asking. <http://www.ncahf.org/pp/definitions.html>

<http://www.consumer.gov/index.htm> (includes consumer information from the government about such issues as recalls, ID theft, Federal Trade Commission actions and fraud)

<http://medlineplus.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/arthritis.html>

<http://www.cancer.org/> (American Cancer Society)

<http://www.quackwatch.org/> is a nonprofit corporation whose purpose is to combat health-related frauds, myths, fads, and fallacies.