Prescription For Finding Health Information Online

(NAPSA)—The Internet offers a wealth of information about health issues. But just as it's important to choose your health care provider carefully, it's also essential to evaluate any Web site you consult.

Not all the information you find online is reliable and some misinformation could even be harmful to your health.

When looking for a source of health information, here are a few questions that Health Net, Inc. suggests you should ask yourself:

• Who is responsible for the site? Somewhere on the site you should be able to find who sponsors the site so you can decide what the motivation was for creating the site. Is the site created by the government, an educational organization, a nonprofit or a company trying to sell you something?

• What does the site ask you to tell them about yourself? If you provide information to that site, will it be given to others? A privacy policy should explain as much.

• Where does the health information on the site come from? Medical research is the best source for health information. It is not enough for the site to say that the information it provides is based on the latest research. Such information should be backed up with articles in medical journals.

• Who reviews the information on the site? Are qualified medical professionals looking at everything that appears online? The

Information that is printed on a health Web site should be well researched and reviewed by a medical professional.

site should have an expert in the field that reviews everything it posts.

• Is the information easy to understand?

• Is the information up to date? Medical breakthroughs are constantly taking place and a good site will review the latest developments in science and medicine and change its site accordingly.

Health Net suggests that you visit more than one site and make comparisons, and it's always a good idea to discuss the information you find with your health care professional.

For information on health issues, visit www.healthfinder.gov or www.medicare.gov.

You can also find useful information at Health Net's Web site at www.abetterdecision.com or call them at (800) 935-6565 or (TTY/TDD) 1-800-929-9955.