

# Total Nutrition

## Health Info You Can Trust

by Mindy Hermann, R.D.

(NAPSA)—Have you spent hours on the Internet looking for medical problems to match your symptoms? Have you gone to the doctor armed with the latest research on your condition? We have amazing access to health information, thanks to the Internet and the thousands of organizations that make information available. How can you tell if information is trustworthy?



**Mindy Hermann**

**Find out who runs the site.** Sites

run by well-respected national organizations such as the American Cancer Society are generally dependable. “Any good site should make its sponsorship, source of financial support and sources of information very visible,” suggests Jill Shuman, MS, RD, ELS, a lecturer at the Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University and a Boston-based science writer.

**Understand the domain.**

Sites that end in “.gov” for local, state or federal government sites or in “.edu” for sites from educational institutions such as universities are generally dependable.

**Look for the purpose of the site.** Shuman suggests clicking on “about us” or “about this site” for information on the sponsor’s purpose, funding and management. Just because a site is run by a nonprofit organization does not mean that its information is balanced and dependable.

**Check for references.** “Scientific information should be referenced,” says Shuman. “If the source is an article from a major medical journal or from a government site, the information is likely to be good. Be wary of scientific articles with no citations or that express only the author’s opinion.”

**Make sure the information is current.** Health information changes rapidly, and trustworthy sites update and review their articles regularly. A good site will also let you know which articles are no longer being updated.

**Link to the links.** Shuman advises to check out links from inside the site. Links to commercial sites, product pages or questionable organizations may mean that the site’s information is not objective. “And always look for a privacy policy. Otherwise, your name could be sold to other organizations or to marketers.”

**Are food product sites OK?**

Some are, but it’s important to look at their sources. For example, Whole Grain Total® cereal ([www.totalcereal.com](http://www.totalcereal.com)) offers sourced scientific information, recipes, nutrition facts and explanations of symbols on the package.

**Ask Mindy**

**Q: Are sites that are run by doctors dependable?**

**A:** Sometimes. The doctor may be using the Internet to sell a product, promote a book or get more patients. An M.D. degree does not guarantee that information provided is unbiased and accurate.

