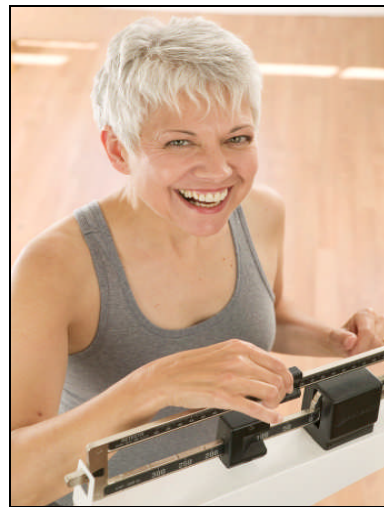


Wired up to Wellbeing



Follow the e-Plan

Accessing online information about health and wellbeing

Introduction

Access to the Internet and the ability to locate information online quickly and efficiently is a real advantage to those interested in keeping informed about their health and wellbeing. The web offers a huge resource of information about particular conditions and treatments as well as being the quickest way to locate services and support groups.

Of course, for a reliable diagnosis, you should always consult your doctor about any concerns you may have about your health. His or her expertise and appreciation of your medical history cannot be replaced by the Internet!

In this module you'll get a taste of just some of the information available. You'll have the chance to use the web to investigate the following areas:

Activity	Page
1) Researching health issues	3
2) Patient choice - patient rights	5
3) Getting help and support	7
4) Wellbeing and staying healthy	9
5) Complementary therapy	11

If you enjoy this lesson, make sure you try the next module, which looks at using the Internet to connect with others through forums and social networking websites.

Good luck and enjoy the session!

Birmingham Library Services

Wired up to Wellbeing grew out of an initiative from Birmingham's Yardley Libraries to empower the over-50s with support in using the Internet. The pilot project was part of the wider strategy of Birmingham City Council to foster greater independence among older citizens. Yardley Libraries partnered with Flo-Joe Training and Consultants to devise the course and deliver sessions to Library staff and members of the public.

Researching Health Issues

Not surprisingly, with the Internet as huge as it is, users often turn to the web for answers to any questions they may have about their own or loved one's health problems.

Try practising your own online research skills. Use the websites below to find out more about these conditions and answer these questions:

>> www.nhs.uk

(select 'Health A-Z' on the left at the top of the screen)

>> www.bupa.co.uk

(select 'Health information' along the top then the Bupa's A-Z Health Factsheets)

What's the most common form of arthritis?

What are the symptoms of diabetes?

I wonder if I can find out something about ...
(you choose)

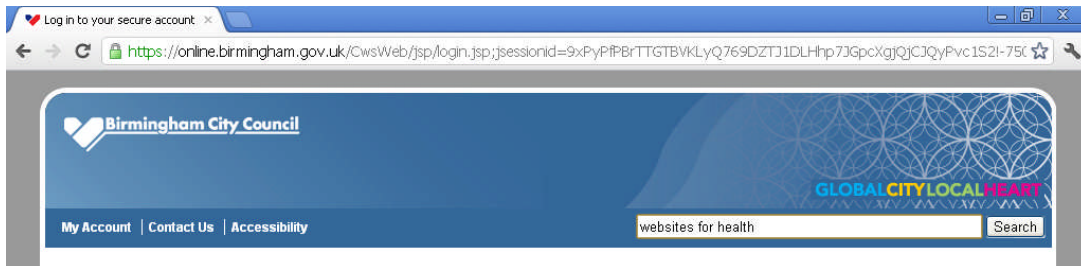
Remember that anybody can put content on the Internet and write whatever they like. Obviously we can't trust our health to unreliable or inappropriate websites. So here are a few things you can check:

- 1) *Is the website UK based? Conditions and medicines can have different names in other countries and a UK site is likely to be more relevant to your needs.*
- 2) *Is the website commercial and if so is it a brand you know and can trust?*
- 3) *Are links from one website to another recommendations from the first site or paid-for advertisements?*

To find out more about a particular website, read the 'About us' section, check the 'Contact us' page to see where the company is based. A '.co.uk' address indicates it's a company rather than a not-for profit organisation. A '.org' address does not always mean a site is non-commercial.

When is it time to call 999? Go to www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk, click ‘**Check your symptoms**’ along the top, and try the three-stage advice guide for a symptom of your choice and whether it requires a trip to the hospital. (Start by clicking ‘**Search by A-Z**’)

Links from one website to another, especially if the linking site is a reputable organisation, is evidence that the site being linked to can be trusted.



Go to >> www.birmingham.gov.uk and search for ‘**websites for health**’ and click the first search result. We’ll be looking at some of these sites below. For the time-being, visit >> www.netdoctor.co.uk. In the lower part of the screen click ‘**Medicines A-Z**’ to find out more about a medicine you’ve taken recently.



As we saw earlier, you will often come across sites that contain a mixture of weblinks recommended by the website as well as automatically generated adverts from sites like Google. It’s useful to be able to distinguish between the two. These adverts usually run across the top or down the side of the page.

Go to >> www.patient.co.uk and hover the cursor over ‘**Diseases & Conditions**’ and click one of the conditions.’. Can you spot the Google adverts?

Patient Choice - Patient Rights



NHS Direct is also your first port-of-call if you're looking for contact details for local services. Go to the address below and look for '**Find your nearest**' on the right of the screen. Add your postcode and search for the following three services. Make a note of the phone numbers of each of your local services:

>> www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

Doctor
Tel:

Dentist
Tel:

Pharmacy
Tel:

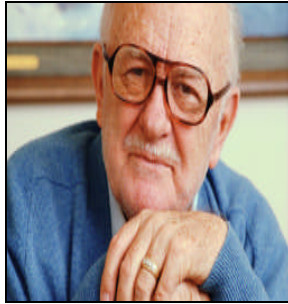
Did you know?

Patients have the right to choose the place, date and time of their first outpatient appointment at a hospital or clinic. 'Choose and Book' gives you the chance to book your appointment at your GP's surgery, by phone or over the Internet. The Choose and Book website provides you with all the information you need to make use of the service. If you'd like to find out how the system works, go to the link below and click '**Patients**' in the centre of the screen then '**What is choose and book?**' on the left. Scroll down to find out how it works.

>> www.chooseandbook.nhs.uk

Of course, in order to choose you need to be able to compare the services available. You can now do this online at another NHS website – NHS Choices. (cont.)

Making Choices



Frank has to go in to hospital for an allergy and is keen to find out which one is the best. Go to >> www.nhs.uk and click '**Health services near you**' at the top right of the screen. Click '**Hospitals and consultants**'. Add your postcode and type 'Allergies'. Which hospital would you recommend?

Try researching another operation which is relevant to you. Go back to the homepage and start again.

Making Complaints

If you're not satisfied with treatment or the service you've received from the NHS you have the right to complain. If you're interested in finding out the procedure for registering a complaint, go to:

>> www.adviceguide.org.uk

and search for '**nhs complaints**' in the search box on the left.

A further source of information about making a complaint about the NHS is through the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman.

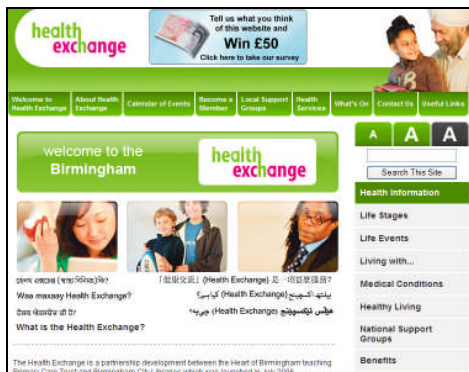
>> www.ombudsman.org.uk

Getting Help and Support

The Internet is often the quickest way of finding contact details of local and national **support groups**. The three websites below are local sites that offer a wealth of information:



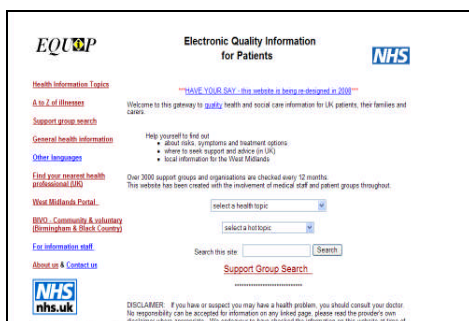
Birmingham Older People
The Information Zone for Older People on the Birmingham City Council website offers advice on a wide range of issues such as housing, social services, transport and advocacy. Go to www.birmingham.gov.uk and search for 'information older people'. Click the first search result.



Health Exchange

The new Health Exchange Hub aims to deliver information, advice and guidance on health and healthy lifestyles in Birmingham communities. Visit the link below, click '**Find me a**' along the top and then '**Support group**' to find out about what's available for the over 50s.

>> www.healthexchange.org.uk



Equip

Equip contains quality-checked health and social care information for the West Midlands. Click '**Support group search**', then '**Search by topic and county**' and search for a local support group you or a friend or relative might be interested in.

>> www.equip.nhs.uk

Home Improvements

Depending on your circumstances, you can get help adapting your home from your local **Home Improvement Agency**. Do you know of anyone who could benefit from:

help with the garden?
 help with home security?
 general repairs?
 installing central heating?

Go to the website below and click '**Home Improvement Agencies**' on the top then '**HIAs case studies**'.
 >> www-foundations-uk-com



Transport

Find out more about:

Shopmobility Birmingham

>> www.birminghamshopmobility.org

Ring and Ride

>> www.ringandride.org

and Motability for advice for disabled people and their mobility needs:

>> www.motability.co.uk

Need Financial Assistance?

Winter fuel payments

Search for '**Winter fuel payments helpline**' on DirectGov website:

>> www.directgov.uk

Carer's allowance

Search for '**Carer's allowance**' at this site (the search box in the top right hand corner):

>> www.direct.gov.uk

Benefits and grants generally

Try Turn2us for advice on available financial help. Click '**Help for older people**':

>> www.turn2us.org.uk

Wellbeing and Staying Healthy



How healthy is your diet? Do you drink more than the recommended limit? Try the quizzes at the NHS site. Hover the cursor over '**Live Well**' and select '**Health check tools**'.

>> www.nhs.uk



Walk 2000 promotes walking for health in Birmingham. Is there a walk near you? Click '**Walk routes**' on the left then a route on the left to see a map of the walk:

>> www.birmingham.gov.uk/walk2000



'Be Active Plus') helps people to become healthier by increasing their physical activity:

>> www.birmingham.gov.uk/eop

Scroll down and find out what activities are on offer.

How good are your first aid skills skills? Try the 'Test your skills' activity on the the BBC website:

>> www.bbc.co.uk/health/first_aid



Positive mental health

Celia has been helped with her anxiety thanks to 'Books on Prescription', which aims to help people with psychological problems.

Go to >> www.birmingham.gov.uk and do a search for '**books on prescription**' to find out more.

Complementary Therapy



When searching for information on a very large website it can sometimes be quicker to use a search engine like Google to find what you're looking for. Try using this technique to learn more about complementary therapy.

Therapies

Search for complementary medicine at specific sites on Google.

At Google type:

**site:www.channel4.com
complementary medicine**

or

**site:www.bbc.co.uk complementary
medicine**

When you arrive choose any of the following therapies and investigate:

- what it treats
- what the treatment consists of
- any issues to be aware of

Acupuncture
Aromatherapy
Reflexology

Practitioners

Are there any practitioners in complementary medicine near you? You can find out at the Equip site we used earlier. Experiment and find out which is the quickest way to locate the section you need:

1) Go to >> **www.equip.nhs.uk** and try to navigate to the complementary medicine page.

2) Try searching the website through Google again:

**site:www.equip.nhs.uk
complementary medicine**



Complementary medicines and therapies can have side effects. Use your Internet search skills to find out what these might be. Go to Google and type the name of the therapy + "side effects". For example:

reflexology "side effects"

NB: You should view the results with caution as many of the sites with this search are commercial (notice the .com and .co.uk addresses).