

There is a lot of misinformation about healthcare, medications, and supplements. Being an informed consumer allows you to play an active role in your healthcare decision-making.

QUICK LINKS TO HEALTH INFO

- www.mayoclinic.org
Patient Care and Health Information.
Great for general information on conditions, tests, & procedures.
- www.cdc.gov
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
Great for vaccine information, general health information, prevention strategies, & disease outbreaks.
- www.heart.org
Great for information on heart conditions.
- www.diabetes.org
Great for information on diabetes.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A CONSUMER?

A consumer is someone who buys goods and services for his or her own use. Healthcare is considered a good or service. By staying informed on your health conditions, medications, insurance, etc. you can make educated decisions WITH your healthcare team.

Being an informed and wise healthcare consumer is more important now than it has been in the past. Information about medicine and healthcare is more accessible through the internet, however, it is impossible for the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to evaluate every medication claim or social media post for accuracy.

To protect yourself from fraud, scams, wasteful use of your health benefits, and ensure you are receiving the best care - be informed!

WHERE TO FIND HEALTH INFORMATION

Use sources that are unbiased and reviewed for accuracy to educate yourself. Universities, government agencies, professional organizations, and foundations are often reliable. See the orange box to the left for suggestions.

In general, avoid blogs, internet discussion boards, and social media. These can be heavily influenced by personal opinion, which may not be accurate.

Rely on your physicians, pharmacists, nurses, and other healthcare providers to answer your questions. They have received education specific to health conditions and usually have your best interests in mind.

IS IT EFFECTIVE? IS IT SAFE? IS IT WORTH IT?

April 2017

EFFICACY

The efficacy, or how well something works, is best evaluated by a study or trial that minimizes outside influences and determines how successful a procedure, medication, or supplement might be for a particular condition.

When reading any article about the efficacy results of a study, ask yourself these questions:

- Are they leaving anything out?
- Does it sound too good to be true?
- Do they provide the link to the original research?
- Who did the study?
- How big was the study?

SAFETY

Few health decisions come without any risk of negative effects. It is important to be aware of potential risks for a given treatment.

Ask your doctor:

- Does this procedure, medication, or supplement have any negative effects associated with it?
- How common are those negative effects?
- Do the benefits of the treatment outweigh those risks?
- Is it safe to take with my other medications or conditions?

COST EFFECTIVENESS

Even if the treatment is considered effective, you should still ask yourself if the effects of the treatment are worth the cost you will be paying for it.

For example:

A new medication becomes available that has been shown to be effective at shortening the duration of your cold symptoms by 24 hours but costs you \$300. Is it worth it for you? What is more important to you? 24 hours of symptoms that can be treated with over-the-counter treatments? Or \$300?

OTHER TIPS:

- **Know your benefits.** Use your health plan to provide you the most benefit at the lowest cost. Choose in-network providers, take advantage of preventive screenings, and avoid unnecessary services.
- **Get a second opinion.** Be involved in your physician visits, ask your questions, and if questions remain or something doesn't seem right, seek a second opinion.
- **Utilize all resources available to you.** Search out community programs or additional programs offered through your health insurance.
- **Think about the future.** Be informed and forward-thinking about how your current habits affect your health and costs in the future. Healthy habits now, mean fewer health problems down the road.

Red flags for health fraud scams

In an attempt to protect consumers from health fraud scams that can waste money and lead to delays in patients getting proper treatment, the FDA has identified the following claims as red flags for fraud:

- One product does it all!
- Personal testimonials - which are easy to make up
- Quick fixes
- "All natural"
- "Miracle cure" or "new discovery"
- Conspiracy theories

For more information from the FDA on this, visit:
www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ProtectYourself/HealthFraud



EMI Health and Veridicus Health care about your health and well-being. If you have healthcare questions, contact our team of registered nurses, mental health professionals, clinical pharmacists, and wellness coaches.

Please contact us at 1-855-586-2568.
We are available Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. MT.

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References available upon request