

APPENDIX A

How to evaluate information sources

There are many sources of information about children with chronic illnesses. Below are a few things to consider when evaluating the quality of the information you find during your research.

- **Type of source**

Large, professionally developed websites are more likely to contain reputable information. These include websites of government agencies, universities, hospitals, and nonpartisan national advocacy organizations. Academic journals are also reliable sources of information because all articles have undergone a rigorous independent evaluation by other experts in the field. Less reliable sources include blogs, testimonials, and anecdotal information.

- **Examples of credible information sources**

- » Official government websites (e.g. CDC.gov)
- » Universities and hospitals (e.g. hopkinsmedicine.org)
- » National advocacy organizations (e.g. The American Cancer Society)
- » Peer-reviewed journals (e.g. *The Journal of School Nursing*)

- **Author's background**

In general, information that is written by someone with a degree or credentials appropriate to the subject is more credible than information without a named author. Even without a specific author listed, information from government agencies, universities, hospitals, and nonpartisan national advocacy organizations is more likely to be accurate and reliable than from another source without a listed author.

- **Publication date**

Look at the date that the source was produced or when the website was last updated. Information may appear to be from a credible source, but if it has not been updated recently, then the information may be outdated or inaccurate.

- **Source reviews**

Peer-reviewed information, such as articles in academic journals, has been reviewed by experts for content and soundness of the information. Articles in academic journals always include citations. The use of citations in any source generally suggests the information is scientifically based. A citation can be in-text (Author & Author, 2013) or a footnote.¹

- **Objectivity**

Be cautious when reviewing information from sources that are emotionally or financially connected to the subject, including blogs, web forums, and individual sites. Although parents and teachers may share interesting personal experiences about managing the needs of a child with chronic illness, the information they provide may not have been evaluated to assess its efficacy for all children. Still, other parents and teachers can offer important insight, help, and support if this advice is consumed critically and thoughtfully.