

The iWISE* checklist for trustworthy health information on websites

This checklist helps you decide whether a piece of health information on a website can be trusted. If all or almost all points are fulfilled, the information is likely to be reliable.

This checklist is meant only for websites that provide information about treatments or health-related decisions. It is not suitable for: package leaflets of medications, videos, or posts on social media.

* Info Without Side Effects

☐ The health information **does not contain advertising.**

There is no advertising in the text or in the images for anything that costs money. The reason is: anyone who advertises a specific treatment cannot provide unbiased information about other treatments.

Be cautious if you see ads for things like dietary supplements, medications or remedies, for specific health examinations, for paid courses, or suggestions to buy something from an online shop.

☐ I feel the information is presented **in a balanced way** (the health information describes, for example, advantages and disadvantages, different treatment options, ...).

The information is not one-sided. It explains, for example, that every treatment can have risks or side effects, and that there is usually more than one treatment option. "Waiting and doing nothing" can also be an option - because sometimes symptoms improve on their own.

Be cautious if a particular treatment or medical test is praised excessively or presented as risk-free, or if another treatment or method is presented negatively without a clear and understandable explanation.

☐ **Technical terms are used sparingly**, and their meaning is explained.

If a technical term is truly necessary, its meaning is explained in simple language. Often, however, such terms are not needed at all - they are just used to sound impressive or more "scientific".

Be cautious if information is difficult to understand and uses many scientific-sounding words that are not explained.



The health information is from an **independent institution** that presumably does not make any money from our health (e.g., no suppliers of medicines or food supplements, ...).

You can usually find out who is behind a health information website by checking the “Imprint,” “About us,” or similar sections. For example, if an organization sells products for treating health problems, it cannot provide independent information about other treatment options.

Companies that sell medications, dietary supplements, or devices meant to improve health are **not independent**. The same is true for institutions that earn money from providing treatments, such as private clinics or private health resorts.

Independent sources are usually universities or research institutes. Public institutions, such as the Ministry of Health, public health insurance providers, foundations, or non-profit associations can also be independent.



The health information states in detail **which sources** are behind the facts mentioned (bibliography, links to studies, ...).

The sources make it possible to trace which scientific studies were used to examine, for example, how well a treatment works. For other claims as well, sources make it possible to see where the information comes from.

Be cautious if it is not possible to trace which scientific studies or sources are behind the statements.



The health information indicates how well the facts claimed are **scientifically supported**.

It not only explains whether there is scientific research on a certain treatment or medical test, but also how strong and reliable that research is. It makes clear, for example, if a treatment or method might help but has not been well studied yet - or if good, reliable studies clearly show the benefits.

Be cautious if, for example, a treatment is presented as completely effective, but there is no mention whether this has been well studied in reliable scientific research.



It is clear **when** the health information was **created or updated**.

A date shows whether the information is up to date. If it is already several years old, new studies may have been published since then that could change the conclusions.

Be cautious if it is unclear whether the health information is current or outdated.

