



Misinformation and Cancer

You may want to learn as much as possible about your cancer diagnosis, side effects, treatment options and more. What is important is to make sure you get accurate information from reliable sources. This fact sheet discusses:

- **What misinformation is**
- **How your healthcare team can help**
- **How to spot misinformation**
- **How to talk to your loved ones about cancer misinformation**



What Is Misinformation?

Misinformation is false, inaccurate or misleading information. It can be found online or in print, spread by social media by text messages and emails, or shared in person.

Misinformation can be spread on purpose for bad reasons, including financial gain or to sway a person to adopt certain views. Misinformation can also be spread by people with the best intentions, who do not realize what they share is false.

Cancer misinformation can range from claims about its causes and treatment. Cancer misinformation can be confusing and convincing. It can distract you from pursuing clinically-researched treatment options or to have false beliefs about your condition or prognosis.

The National Cancer Institute provides evidence-based information about common beliefs about cancer (www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/causes-prevention/risk/myths).

The Mayo Clinic also discusses common myths (www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/cancer/in-depth/cancer-causes/art-20044714).



Talk With Your Healthcare Team

If you have any doubts or concerns about what you hear from others or find on the internet, your health care team can help. Your doctors, nurses, pharmacist and others can provide their expertise answer any questions and clarify whether information or sources can be trusted.





How to Recognize Misinformation

When you find information that seems “too good to be true,” it may be. Ask yourself: Can I trust this source to provide reliable information? Here are some ways to tell that you have reliable information:

- The source is a credible news organization, university, government agency or non-profit
- The web address ends in .gov or .edu
- The site includes statements from reliable experts on the topic
- The information was reviewed by fellow scientists or doctors (peer-reviewed)
- The information is consistent with other reliable sources
- You can find an ‘About Us’ page on the website that tells about the information source and their approach

The following are signs of information and source that may not be reliable. The more of these that are present, the more likely the source should be questioned.

- The source is not an institution and has a motivation that is unclear
- The web address ends in .net or .com
- The site includes quotes and anecdotes from people who are not experts on the topic
- It is not clear where the information comes from
- The information cannot be found in other reliable sources
- The site appears to have an emotional or alarming bias or wants you to react a certain way



Talking About Misinformation With Others

Often, your loved ones may give you misinformation without realizing it, and may do this out of love and concern. It can be difficult to explain that information is not trustworthy. At times, loved ones may feel you are refusing valuable advice or even trying to hurt them.

- Listen to their fears and anxieties about your diagnosis
- Explain what you have learned about misinformation
- Assure them that you will check with your health care team about what is best

CancerCare® Can Help

Founded in 1944, CancerCare is the leading national organization providing free support services and information to help people manage the emotional, practical and financial challenges of cancer. Our comprehensive services include resource navigation, counseling and support groups over the phone, online and in-person, educational workshops, publications and financial and co-payment assistance. All CancerCare services are provided by master's-prepared oncology social workers and world-leading cancer experts.

To learn more, visit www.cancercares.org or call **800-813-HOPE (4673)**.

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