



Search Smart for your Health
Know where to look and what to use
when it comes to searching for health information

Atlanta, Ga (October 1, 2015) - Governor Nathan Deal has proclaimed October to be Health Literacy Month in Georgia. Health literacy is the ability to obtain, understand, and use health information to make good decisions about your health. In recognition of Health Literacy Month, The Georgia Alliance for Health Literacy and the Georgia Health Sciences Library Association have teamed up to help Georgians learn where to search for easy-to-understand, trustworthy, and actionable information about their health. The 2015 Health Literacy campaign is called *Search Smart for Your Health*.

The Pew Foundation says nearly three out of four adults used the Internet to search for information about their health over the last year. Experts caution, however, that you can't believe everything you read about health on the Internet. *Search Smart for Your Health* offers Internet workshops for older adults and teens in Georgia. Georgians can visit gahealthliteracy.org and click on *Search Smart for your Health* to learn what websites they can rely on.

"The Internet is a valuable health resource, but it also has confusing and conflicting information, and it is not the only source of reliable information," says Don Rubin, Chairman, Georgia Alliance for Health Literacy. "This month especially, we want to call attention to the sources and resources that Georgians can rely upon to make the right decisions and find the right care when it comes to preventing illness and managing their health."

Relevancy is key when searching for the right information. In addition to finding a clinically credible and up-to-date health source online, such as: www.medlineplus.gov, www.cdc.gov, www.healthfinder.gov, and www.ahrq.gov, individuals should drill down further to find information that pertains specifically to them. For example: Are they a senior or a teenager? What is their ethnicity? What condition(s) do they already have? Individuals need to be able to find relevant information that makes sense for them, so they can act upon it and use it to their benefit.

"Using credible sources that use plain language is key," says Tara Douglas-Williams, Georgia Health Sciences Library Association member. "We support libraries and librarians to ensure they have the most up-to-date and easy to understand information for consumers. We also encourage people to bring the information they find to their providers, and continue to dialogue with caregivers and ask questions."

Here are some basic “what you need to know” pointers when searching for credible health information:

1. **Compare information** – Visit more than one web site and gather information from other sources too, not just web sites.
2. **Find out who is responsible for the web site** – Review “About us” and “Contact us” sections, and look for a privacy policy or editorial review board.
3. **Look for web sites with .gov, .edu, .org**, - Whose purpose is to provide credible information. They will not sell or lead individuals falsely.
4. **Seek health information based on medical research** – Scientifically based information will provide results and is the most trustworthy. Look for article references, dates, and sources to back up the information.
5. **Do not give out any personal information** to any web site if you are not sure - Read the privacy policy on the web site first if you have any questions.
6. **Bring a copy of the information you find to your next doctor’s appointment** - It is a great opportunity to share information and get better insight about the information you are searching on. Your doctor or provider will be happy you did.

“Good helpful information is out there and readily available. People just need to know where to look to find the most reliable, effective, and easy-to-understand information for their needs,” says Rubin.

For more information please contact:

Georgia Alliance for Health Literacy www.gahealthliteracy.org

The Georgia Alliance for Health Literacy (GAHL) is a nonprofit, volunteer coalition representing educators, researchers, government officials, health care providers, health care payers, patients and consumers. GAHL members raise awareness about health literacy skills, offer health literacy resources, and foster better communication for a healthy Georgia and a robust health care industry. GAHL operates through in-kind donations of meeting space, conference calling capability and collateral development. GAHL’s presence online is funded through donations and is maintained by members of GAHL. **Email** gahealthliteracy@gmail.com.

Georgia Health Sciences Library Association www.gshla.org

The Georgia Health Sciences Library Association (GHSLA) promotes the health sciences in Georgia through activity, communication, and interaction in those wishing to advance in health sciences librarianship. Our membership includes librarians who work in hospitals, clinics, and special libraries associated with health care education or the health care industry, as well as physicians and their associates. **Email** outreach@gshla.org.