

# Health and Safety Information on the Internet

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The *Quality Practices Guides* for each Quality Assurance system requires services to consult recognised authorities for information on health and safety issues. The internet can be a fast and effective way to access relevant information.

As useful as the internet may be, it is important to be careful when searching for health and safety information. Because of the enormous amount and variety of information available on the web, it may not be clear how accurate or current the information is.

HealthInsite ([www.healthinsite.gov.au](http://www.healthinsite.gov.au)) is a government website that has been designed to provide users with links to reliable information on health and safety topics. HealthInsite suggests asking some questions about a site to determine the quality of the information on it:

- **Why was it created?**

Think about who the site is aimed at and whether this influences the information in any way.

- **Who is responsible for the information?**

Look for contact details and information on the organisation. Consider whether the site has a commercial interest in the information they provide.

- **Is the subject coverage complete and in-depth?**

Consider whether the information is unbiased, clear and extensive. Are there options to find out further information?

- **Is the information up-to-date?**

Always check the 'last updated' date at the bottom of a page for an indication of how recent the information is.

All information available through HealthInsite is Australian and has been assessed for the quality of its content. It contains health related information from peak organisations, government agencies and educational and research institutions.

## This article relates to:

**FDCQA:** Principle 4.1

**OSHCQA:** Principle 7.2

**QIAS:** Principle 5.3

## How do you know if the source is a relevant authority?

Relevant authorities are organisations responsible for monitoring, researching and advising the community on matters relating to a particular area in which they have specialist knowledge. They are often state and territory based government departments or independent authorities. Some relevant authorities on health and safety that provide information include Kidsafe, Westmead Children's Hospital, The Better Health Channel and the Poisons Information Centre, but there are many more.

Resource and advisory agencies can provide details of relevant authorities that can assist you with finding health and safety information. A list of Resource and Advisory Agencies is available on the NCAC website ([www.ncac.gov.au](http://www.ncac.gov.au)).



## Finding information on the internet: poisons and poisonous plants

All services are required to reduce the risk of poisonous products and plants in the child care environment. Poisons may include medications, detergents or cleaning products, garden chemicals and any other dangerous or toxic substances. Poisons and poisonous plants should be made inaccessible to children and poisonous substances should be clearly labelled.

To begin, it may be useful to use a search engine to locate information. To find information on poisonous plants it would be useful to limit your search to pages from Australia (search engines such as Google and Yahoo allow this) as information on poisonous plants in another country is unlikely to be useful to your service. There are many other search engines available, such as Ask Jeeves, Webcrawler and AltaVista, that may offer different search options and results. It may also be helpful to try searching with different words for the topic.

If a search engine does not provide what you are looking for, searching the websites of the following recognised authorities may be useful.

### **Westmead Children's Hospital** **([www.chw.edu.au](http://www.chw.edu.au))**

This site provides a factsheet on Kids and Poison, with information on preventing poisoning, first aid tips and contact details for the Poisons Information Centre. There is also a factsheet on poisonous plants and children that includes information on recognising poisonous plants, a safety checklist, symptoms of contact and first aid procedures. Translations are also available for some information.

### **Kidsafe** **([www.kidsafe.com.au](http://www.kidsafe.com.au))**

Kidsafe Australia was established as the Child Accident Prevention Foundation of Australia and aims to alleviate injury and harm to children. The site provides links to websites of state and regional branches of Kidsafe and can provide

useful health and safety information on topics such as safety switches, toy safety, safe sleeping for children under two years old, home safety checks, poisons, and road, car, bike and internet safety.

The site provides factsheets on children and poisons which have useful information on how poisoning commonly occurs, as well as tips on prevention and safety practices.

Kidsafe WA ([www.kidsafewa.com.au](http://www.kidsafewa.com.au)) has a Poisoning Prevention Action Kit that covers identifying poisons, how poisoning happens, prevention strategies and resources and suggestions for further information. The site also has a factsheet on poisonous plants.

### **Better Health Channel** **([www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au))**

The Better Health Channel website was developed by the Victorian Government to provide reliable and current information of health and safety topics. There are over 150 factsheets on topics such as children's safety, immunisation, food safety, nutrition, dental care, behaviour, child development and playground safety.

The site provides information on the accidental poisoning of children and covers topics such as symptoms, common poisons, treatment and reducing risk. There is also information on fungi poisoning, including types of poisonous fungi and protecting children from poisoning.

### **Poisons Information Centre** **Queensland -** **([www.health.qld.gov.au/PoisonsInformationCentre](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/PoisonsInformationCentre))** **Victoria - ([www.rch.org.au/poisons](http://www.rch.org.au/poisons))**

Poisons Information Centres are state based authorities that can provide information on prevention, first aid and other information on poisons. The Queensland and Victorian Poisons Information Centres provide poison information sheets and other useful links on their websites. Other services can be contacted by telephoning the National Poisons Information Centre on 13 11 26. ■

## Further reading and references

- Hughes, L. and Tansey, S. (2004) What is a Recognised Authority? *Putting Children First*. Issue 9.
- HealthInsite - [www.healthinsite.gov.au/topics/How\\_to\\_Assess\\_Health\\_Information\\_Online](http://www.healthinsite.gov.au/topics/How_to_Assess_Health_Information_Online)