COVID-19 Information and Misinformation
Protecting Yourself From Misinformation
Educate yourself about COVID-19

- What are the symptoms?
- How does it spread?
- What other illnesses are similar?

The more you know about the disease, the easier it will be to spot misinformation.
Things to think about when you are researching

- **Who** - Who is the author of the information?
- **What** - What are they saying?
- **When** – Is this information up to date and still relevant?
- **Where** - Where are they getting their information from? Do they cite their sources?
- **Why** - What is the goal behind the information?
Share with sources with others

- Don’t just tell someone information, show them where you found it.
- Encourage others to do their own research.
- Double check information, and look for the source.
- Things can change. What was true yesterday may not be true today.
Trustworthy Websites
Websites

Larimer County Health and Environment
https://www.larimer.org/health

Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment
https://www.colorado.gov/cdphe

Centers for Disease Control
https://www.cdc.gov/

World Health Organization
https://www.who.int/
Databases

The CDC website has link to COVID-19 Databases and Journals.
Other Sites and Search Engines
Filter Bubbles

Search algorithms on sites like Google change their results based on different factors.

- Where you live.
- What you have searched for previously.
- Search engines filter what they think you want to see, not what you are looking for!
- Use specific terms instead of general terms when searching.
Example 1

Eli Pariser: **Beware Online “Filter Bubbles”**
Example 2

Eli Pariser: Beware Online "Filter Bubbles"
Wikipedia

No, really! Wikipedia is a great place to BEGIN your research!

- Wikipedia cites its sources and you can find links to many of them
- Knowing which topics tend to have more accurate info (tech stuff, etc)
- If you want to be sure about something, don’t stop at one source!
Is It Reliable?

Determining whether a webpage, article, or resource is reliable can be tricky, but there are a few things to look out for:

- The Source: Who put this information out there? Why might they have done this?
- The Site: How does the site look? When was it last updated?
- The Content: Is this the only place you can find this information? Do sources cite each other and nobody else? How is the writing (is it well-written, with good spelling and grammar)?
- The Domain: Is this a .com, .org, or .gov? Or is it an odd extension that you do not recognize?

None of these are a 100% guarantee that the website is credible, but they can be a good indication one way or the other.
Be Careful

Even reliable-looking sources can be biased, unreliable, or just plain wrong. Information can also become less accurate if it is passed through a middleman.

This comes up a lot when news websites and other resources for regular readers use scientific studies as a source. Without the proper context, seeing this information through a news channel can be convincing, and it’s hard to know how trustworthy the original study was.
Snopes

- [https://www.snopes.com/](https://www.snopes.com/)
- Source for discerning what is true and what is false.
- Can submit items for fact-checking

No, McDonald's Is Not Offering 2 Free Big Mac Meals for a Month

Yet another “free coupon” scam attempted to lure social media users with bogus promises.

DAVID MIKKELSON
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Take Another 30 Seconds

After you find a resource that seems good, don’t stop there! If accuracy is important to you, don’t just read the first result on Google and call it a day.

Find other resources and see if they back up what you’re saying. Check and make sure that matching resources aren’t just quoting each other and nobody else.

A good rule of thumb is to find 3 separate resources that have the same information--this makes it more likely that you have found accurate info.
Ask Questions

Always ask questions of your resources.

Whether you are using a book, a website, a wiki, or a peer-reviewed journal article, nothing is infallible. Asking questions is how we can sort out good information from bad.

Again...always ask Who, What, When, Where, and Why
Sources

https://www.colorado.gov/cdphe
https://www.snopes.com/
https://www.who.int/
https://www.wikipedia.org/
https://wwwnc.cdc.gov