

### Sifting Through Online Health Information

(NAPSA)—There is a tremendous amount of health and aging information available on the Internet. Unfortunately, not all of it is helpful, and much of it can be harmful. Too much of the Web's medical advice is not based on good science or even common sense, and it is often difficult to tell exactly what is trustworthy and tested. For older adults, who face multiple diseases and unique conditions, finding high-quality health information and making sense of it is especially difficult.

Seniors and their caregivers now have a valuable new tool, Health Compass ([www.healthcompass.org](http://www.healthcompass.org)), to help them navigate the Internet in search of reliable information. Health Compass is an interactive self-study program designed to assist older adults and their caregivers in locating and better understanding information on health and aging.

The Web program is divided into three self-contained sections, seek, evaluate and act, which will help individuals access and act on quality health information by showing them where to look, what to trust and how to proceed.

Health Compass offers specific suggestions on where to find high-quality health and aging knowledge on the Internet and in other media. It also offers tools for critically evaluating and interpreting this information, including definitions of the different types of medical research studies and research terms. The program will also help visitors learn how to assess the quality of both research studies and related Web sites.



**Seniors looking for health information online may want to start with a reliable source.**

Another goal is to help older adults work in better partnership with their physicians and others to make healthcare decisions. Learning about geriatric conditions will help older adults and their families discuss their concerns with their healthcare provider, and it will help foster a more productive relationship between patient and provider. Health Compass will assist older adults, their caregivers and families to join with their healthcare providers and take responsibility, take action and take charge of their health.

Health Compass is sponsored by Merck Institute of Aging & Health, in partnership with the American Federation for Aging Research. The Institute is a non-profit organization working to improve the health and independence of older adults worldwide through education and information. Its Web site, [www.miaonline.org](http://www.miaonline.org), also hosts a set of other geriatric resources and tools, including online toolkits. Older adults and their families can use question checklists and other toolkit resources when speaking with their physicians.