

SPOTTING FALSE NUTRITION INFORMATION ON THE INTERNET

Americans spend billions of dollars each year on nutritional supplements and weight loss products. Many of these are not necessary nor effective. Some are even dangerous. Unfortunately, false claims and misleading information posted on social media may contribute to their popularity. As you scroll through content on the Internet, consider these “warning signs” that what you are reading may not be entirely truthful:

Warning sign 1: Promise of quick and dramatic results

A serious or chronic illness, such as obesity, can rarely be cured in a short time. Studies show that eating healthy and being physically active help prevent chronic disease. If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

Warning sign 2: Personal stories

The positive experiences of a few people do not provide strong evidence about the safety or effectiveness of a product for others. This requires scientific studies conducted by experts who are objective. For evidenced-based nutrition information, visit www.nutrition.gov.

Warning sign 3: Promotions by health professionals

Credentialed health professionals typically do not sell or endorse specific brands of dietary supplements and weight loss products. Their role is to provide accurate and relevant information so that patients can make decisions that match their personal goals and priorities.

In case of doubt, ask the advice of your family's health care provider or a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist (RDN). They can help you decide if it would be of benefit. For additional resources on identifying nutrition misinformation and fraud, visit the USDA and FDA websites.

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