

Information Resource: Public Libraries

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The National Library of Medicine

One impressive source of online information is provided by the National Institutes of Health through their National Library of Medicine (NLM). Their website, found at <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/>, allows visitors to access various services of the NLM. These include, but are not limited to, the following four links:

1) MEDLINE/PubMed. This site, which contains a wide variety of medical journals and articles, helps visitors to identify *sources* of information. In some cases, abstracts (brief descriptions of the articles) are provided. Those interested in reading the full articles will have to get them, either through the NLM or a local/regional library system. Many of these articles are written for professionals and may not be easily followed by the lay public.

2) MEDLINEplus. This site was created for the lay public and can also be directly accessed at <http://www.medlineplus.gov/>. It provides information on conditions and diseases; an encyclopedia; drug information (generic and name brands); dictionaries with spellings and definitions of medical terms; directories giving locations and credentials of doctors, dentists, and hospitals; and also has interactive health tutorials (explaining procedures, for instance);

3) Information on research programs; and

4) Answers to frequently asked questions such as:

- * *How do I find information about a disease, medical condition, or course of therapy?*
- * *Where can I find information about a drug? And*
- * *How can I get a journal article, book, report or audiovisual that NLM owns?*

This website is your government at work, and is a good place to start for getting information.

Local Libraries

If you don't have access to the Internet from a home computer, don't worry. Many local community libraries have expanded their services to include access to the Internet and beyond. That is, as members of regional library systems, they are able to provide online access to databases that will allow people with valid library cards to identify sources of the particular information they seek and, in many cases, to print out full articles.

These databases include sources that directly search the health and medical literature as well as sources of general information, which may include health related articles. Card holders can, for instance, access:

- 1) The **Health-Reference Center** which contains many full-text articles on medicine, health, nursing, nutrition, family health, and more; along with
- 2) **ProQuest Direct**, which searches popular and academic magazines and newspapers – providing access to over 4,000 full-text articles.

In addition, libraries with Internet access may also allow individuals to search the catalogs of one or more local and regional library systems for particular books. When a search is conducted and the book is found, the information provided will identify the library where the book is found, and may also provide it's call number as well as indicate its availability. With information in hand, the librarian can often get the book in question through the interlibrary loan system.

Call your local public libraries to see if they provide these services. For those of you who have home access to the Internet, such searches can usually be conducted from your home by first going to your library's home page. □

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