



# AGING TODAY

## Discern Truth from Misinformation

By Bob Roth, Managing Partner of Cypress HomeCare Solutions



**PCR tests (polymerise chain rection), contact tracing, respiratory droplets. Our newly expanding vocabulary reflects the crash course in public health and epidemiology that has become our pandemic vernacular. Infodemic: add this word and concept to your list if you haven't already.**

An infodemic is an overload of information, often false or unverified, about a problem, especially a major crisis. Quickly spreading in the news, online, and through social media, this information fuels fear and speculation, making the problem worse, not better.

Misinformation is often spread in a disaster. We share our new base of information to be useful to our community. In times that are riddled by anxiety and uncertainty sharing provides engagement. In these situations, misinformation can be spread. Your lovable Uncle Arthur passes on advice that may be factually incorrect. It has been passed around a few times without the intent to mislead. A campaign of disinformation is knowingly spreading misinformation. It is often politically motivated or to sow discord.

In a world where we get our health information through the Internet it is imperative to adopt strategies to discern what studies and websites are trustworthy. We protect our health by hand washing, wearing masks, and maintaining physical distance, but what are we doing to protect our digital hygiene?

Use the Acronym **U ADOPT** to determine the credibility of health-related websites.

**Usability:** Is the website well organized? Can you navigate the site to find the information you are seeking or is it almost deliberately vague?

**Author, who wrote the content?** Are they a qualified source? It is a red flag if you cannot tell who the author is. Do they have an editorial board responsible for reviewing the content they are posting on the

website?

**Date:** Is the scientific information current? For COVID, information has been changing rapidly, If links are broken, that is a sign that the website has not been updated recently.

**Objectivity:** Is the subject fact based and balanced. Do they present side effects or other treatment options? Are you encouraged to check with your Doctor first? Be cautious if you cannot tell what conflicts of interest the author may have. Is there a personal or financial benefit that they can gain if you buy into what they are saying? Be skeptical if the author makes claims that it works for everyone. Watch for expressions like miracle cure. If you feel like your attention is being grabbed, then pull your attention back for a moment and assess the information carefully.

**Purpose:** Is it clear what the aims of the website are and for whom it is intended? Are they simply trying to sell you something or get your personal information?

**Transparency:** Is there an "About Us" or "Who we Are" page? Is there a "privacy policy" or "terms of use" page? How do the website owners collect and use your personal information when you are on their website?

The pandemic's length traps us in a [liminal space](#). To clarify our uprooted life and indefinite future, we try to gather as much information as possible. As we seek new information and we may end up consuming misinformation that is spreading rapidly. Pandemics actually unfold in slow motion, so remember, there is rarely an event that changes the whole landscape on a dime. If we slow down and take a moment to verify new information before sharing it, it is the equivalent of "hand washing for the infodemic."



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