

What is evidence?

If the health information you are reading, watching or listening to is based on reliable evidence it can help you decide whether to trust and use it.

What types of evidence are there?

This table shows the types of reliable evidence used for common health information topics.

Type of evidence	Health information it might be used for
Clinical research	Benefits and risks of treatment.
NHS service information	How the NHS should plan your care.
Patient, carer and service user experience	What it's like to live with a condition.
Topic expert, for example, physiotherapist	Wellbeing and practical information.
Clinical textbooks, patient groups and NHS patient data	Background on causes of an illness, how many people get it, who is most likely to get it and how they respond to treatment.

How can I tell the quality of clinical research?

The more people included in a research study the more reliable the findings. This might not be the case in rare diseases.

Research should be checked by other experts before it is published. This is called peer-review.

You can find out more here: piftick.org.uk/tips-and-guides/pif-guide-what-is-clinical-evidence

How can I be sure about the evidence?

Sometimes it is hard to be certain about evidence. There may not be much evidence or it might conflict. Health information should tell you if evidence is uncertain.

How do I know if something is based on evidence?

Trusted information should list the evidence used to create it. You will see this listed as "references" or "sources". If these are not listed you can ask the producer for them.

How do I know if evidence is up-to-date?

Trusted information will show the date it was created and the date it is due to be reviewed.

Why does this matter?

Understanding how evidence works can help you avoid misinformation and disinformation.

Find out more in our toolkit: piftick.org.uk/guide/health-misinformation-toolkit