A FREE RESOURCE FROM THE JUNIPER FOUNDATION

How to Find Reliable Medical Research

Searching online during a medical crisis can help or harm. These steps help you find trustworthy information and bring it to your care team.

Start with these sources

- [ ] **MedlinePlus** (medlineplus.gov): plain-language health information from the National Library of Medicine
- [ ] **PubMed** (pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov): the main index of published medical research
- [ ] **PubMed Central** (pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov): free full-text articles
- [ ] **Professional societies:** ACOG, SMFM, and the AAP publish the guidelines doctors follow
- [ ] **ClinicalTrials.gov:** studies that are recruiting or under way

Know what kind of study you are reading

- [ ] **Guideline:** experts' recommendations based on all available evidence
- [ ] **Systematic review or meta-analysis:** combines the results of many studies
- [ ] **Randomized trial:** compares treatments fairly by assigning them at random
- [ ] **Observational study:** watches what happens without assigning treatment. It can show a link without proving a cause.
- [ ] **Case report:** the story of one or a few patients. Interesting, and weak evidence on its own.

Five questions to ask of any study

- [ ] Who was studied, and are they like me or my baby?
- [ ] How many people were included?
- [ ] How old is it, and has newer guidance replaced it?
- [ ] Who paid for it?
- [ ] What do the authors say are its limitations?

Be cautious with

- [ ] Headlines that promise a cure or a guarantee
- [ ] Sites that sell the product they recommend
- [ ] Social media posts without a link to the original study
- [ ] Statistics about groups used to predict one person's outcome

Bring it to your doctor

Print or save the article and ask: "Does this apply to our situation? Why or why not?" A good care team welcomes the question.

Juniper Foundation · juniper.org · Free to copy and share for patient education. This sheet is general information and is not medical advice. In an emergency call 911.