

TIPS TO SEPARATE COVID-19 VACCINE FACT FROM FICTION

A wealth of scientific research demonstrates that the COVID-19 vaccines are safe and highly effective at protecting against serious illness. Yet some people are not getting the protection they need because they think that myths they read about the vaccines are true.

U of U Health offers eight simple tips to help distinguish fact from fiction. If you have questions about vaccines, talk with your health care provider.



Scrutinize the source

Is the author from a reputable organization?

- Evaluate whether the source is a known authority on the subject.
- You can put more trust in:
 - news organizations that fact-check their content
 - well-known health organizations
 - government health agencies
 - subject matter experts from those organizations.
- If you don't know the source, evaluate their other posts to see if they seem reliable.
- If no author is listed, be suspicious. Read the information critically and think twice before sharing.



Examine the “expert’s” qualifications

Do the experts listed have training in the topic being discussed?

- Having a medical or graduate degree does not guarantee expertise.
- Put more trust in experts who keep up with the latest information.
- Experts who know about COVID-19 vaccines include virologists, infectious disease specialists, epidemiologists and primary care providers.



Read beyond the headline

Are claims in the headline consistent with the rest of the content?

- Some headlines are written with the intent of getting you to share the article.
- That means they don't always accurately reflect the article's main points.
- Read the entire article to ensure it contains good information that you feel comfortable sharing.



Search for solid evidence that supports claims

Look for links back to sound scientific studies.

- A reliable article will link to the original source underlying claims.
- Look for links that direct you to relevant studies in reputable, peer-reviewed scientific or medical journals.
- Question the information if it only cites blogs, personal or business webpages, or unrelated studies.

For more tips, see other side →



Check the date

Is the information current?

- Information is changing rapidly as science continues to reveal more about the new coronavirus, COVID-19, and vaccines.
- Up-to-the-minute health information is going to be more reliable than data that was published several weeks, months, or years ago.
- Be suspicious of articles that are undated.



Beware of scare tactics

Is the post anecdotal and emotionally charged?

- If an article or social media post makes you angry, fearful, or causes another strong emotion, take a closer look.
- Is it written with a goal to shock or provoke?
- Are the accompanying images alarming?
- Is the message based on anecdotal stories rather than data?
- If so, scrutinize the source and underlying claims, and think before sharing.



Think before sharing

If credibility is in doubt, don't spread the news.

- False information spreads faster than corrections to inaccurate information.
- Resist the urge to quickly share breaking news or trending social media posts.
- Before sharing, see if other credible sources come to the same conclusions.
- Check the comments to see if a qualified expert has corrected misinformation or provided context that puts the information in a different light.



Be a skeptic, not a cynic

Good information is out there—know where to look.

- It's healthy to be a critical thinker but know that there is good information out there.
- If multiple, reliable sources are coming to similar conclusions based on data that are backed by a variety of experts, then chances are, you're on to something good.

“Although we sometimes need to check our first impulse and do a little extra work to find it, seeking out accurate information is important when it comes to keeping ourselves and those around us safe.”

Benjamin Lyons, PhD, assistant professor of health communications at the University of Utah.



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