

# HOW TO SPOT MISLEADING HEALTH CLAIMS

A GUIDE FOR FAMILIES NAVIGATING CONFUSING HEALTH INFORMATION

You're scrolling through your phone and a social media post catches your eye. A childhood vaccine is the cause of a chronic condition. A common medication is secretly dangerous. Thousands of shares. A doctor quoted. A link to a "study." Your stomach drops. **That feeling is normal. In fact, people who spread false health claims count on it.**

## WHY THIS MATTERS

Misleading claims—about nutrition, medications, mental health, vaccines, and more—are everywhere! Once you recognize the patterns, you can confidently evaluate any claim.

### The good news?

The tricks only work if you don't see them coming!

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

**Talk with your child's healthcare team.** If something online concerns you, bring it up. They'd rather have a conversation than have you quietly worry.

**Ask questions.** Your child's healthcare team genuinely wants to discuss them with you. You will not be judged or labeled as anti-science.

**Pause before you share online or with other people.** Take 30 seconds to run through the checklist on the next page. You could be the person who stops a false claim from reaching hundreds more families.



## TRUSTED SOURCES

Your child's healthcare team is always the best first call for questions about your child. For everything else, here are some trusted sources:

AMERICAN ACADEMY  
OF PEDIATRICS (AAP)

[HealthyChildren.org](https://www.healthychildren.org)

CENTER FOR UNBIASED  
SCIENCE AND HEALTH

[UnbiasedScience.org](https://www.unbiasedscience.org)

Scan the QR code for  
more trusted sources



# A CHECKLIST FOR EVALUATING HEALTH CLAIMS

The next time a health claim gives you that pit-in-your-stomach feeling, run through these questions. Each one catches a common manipulation tactic:

## ○ IS THIS CLAIM TRYING TO SCARE OR INFORM ME?

Be skeptical of content that makes you feel intense emotions like anger or hope. Health information can be emotional, but should offer resources and next steps, not panic.

! **Watch for:** *Emotional manipulation*

## ○ AM I BEING OFFERED A SIMPLE FIX TO A COMPLEX PROBLEM?

Most health conditions have multiple causes. If someone blames a single cause or offers a magic solution, be skeptical.

! **Watch for:** *Oversimplification*

## ○ DOES IT CLAIM TIMING PROVES CAUSATION?

When an event and diagnosis happen close together, it's easy to assume that one caused the other, but timing alone isn't evidence.

! **Watch for:** *Coincidental timing*

## ○ WHERE DID THIS INFORMATION COME FROM?

Is it backed by a medical organization, research study, or specialist? A single outlier opinion doesn't change what the broader medical community has found.

! **Watch for:** *Fake experts*

## ○ IS IT TRENDING FOR EVERYONE, OR JUST ON MY FEEDS?

Your social media feed amplifies content you've already engaged with. See if major medical organizations and mainstream news are covering it too.

! **Watch for:** *Echo chambers*

## ○ DOES IT USE UNCERTAINTY TO DISMISS THE SCIENCE?

Science is honest about what it doesn't know, and that's a *strength*, not a weakness. If someone frames this as conspiracy, they're manipulating you.

! **Watch for:** *Exploiting nuance*

## ○ IS SOMEONE PROFITING FROM THIS CLAIM?

Check for financial or personal incentives. These may include: supplement ads, "alternative" product links, or political connections.

! **Watch for:** *Conflicts of interest*

## ○ COULD THIS HAVE BEEN GENERATED BY AI?

AI tools can make realistic articles, images, and fake expert quotes. If writing feels generic, the "expert" doesn't check out, or the source is unfamiliar, verify before trusting it.

! **Watch for:** *Unverified content*

