

The following training is taken and modified from *Helping Older Adults Search for Health Information Online: A Toolkit for Trainers* from the National Institute on Aging. The handouts are at the end of the document.

**Oklahoma Department of Libraries**, last modified December 2018

## Introduction to MedlinePlus

### **The Medline Plus website they will visit...**

- Is sponsored by the National Library of Medicine, which is part of the National Institutes of Health, or NIH.
- NIH is part of the U.S. Government's Department of Health and Human Services.

**“This lesson will introduce you to MedlinePlus, a website that is a source of health information for the general public. The website was developed by the National Library of Medicine, part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.”**

### **Please be aware that...**

- Online health information is in **no way meant to substitute for medical advice from a doctor.**
- In class discussions, students should **not** attempt to provide medical advice to classmates, however well-intentioned it may be.

“Before we actually get into the heart of the lesson, let's review a few basic Internet terms.”

### **INTERNET TERMS**

- 1 back arrow**
- 2 link (or hyperlink)**
- 3 menu**
- 4 scroll**
- 5 scroll bar**
- 6 search box**
- 7 window**

“Before we look at the website, I'd like to have you jot down some information.”

Ask students to write down two diseases or conditions that they would like to know more about. Ask students to think of another health topic that they have heard of, but aren't quite sure what the FULL DEFINITION is. Ask them to write that down and put the word “definition” beside it. Tell students to set that information aside. You'll come back to it later in the lesson.

“We are going to start with learning the features of the **MedlinePlus Home Page**. [www.medlineplus.gov](http://www.medlineplus.gov). Take a look at your computer screens. You should see the **Home Page** of the **MedlinePlus** website. This website contains links to over 800 health topics.”  
Point out and describe these features on the Home Page:

- Español at the top
- The 3 broad categories –Health Topics, Drugs and Supplements, and Videos and Cool Tools
- Lab Test Information
- Medical Encyclopedia
- Health News
- Social Media
- Stay Connected. Type in email for updates. Magazine
- Clinical Trials
- Easy to Read, Multiple Languages
- The Search MedlinePlus Box

“Now we’ll move to learning how to find health topics. If you want to find out about a disease or condition, start with the **Health Topics** button.”

Click on Health Topics and tell students there are two ways to find a topic:

- Using the **alphabet**.
- Using **categories**.

Demonstrate **ONE** way to find information about **Arthritis**.

- Click on **A** under the alphabet. Scroll down to **Arthritis** and click on it.

**OR**

- Click on **Bones, Joints, and Muscles**. An image of a skeleton will appear on the left and list of the body parts on the right. Click on the word Joints either on the image **OR** on the list.

Then click on **Arthritis**.

### **THE ARTHRITIS PAGE (10 Minutes)**

“Let’s look at the features on this page. This page is an example of the kinds of information you will find when you click on any disease or condition.”

Familiarize students with the features of the Arthritis page:

- **Top of Page**

On This Page

Disease Summary

- **Middle of Page**

*Start Here*

Content Titles

- **Side of Page**

Updates, encyclopedia, related topics, languages

“You’ll notice that there are links to lots of information about arthritis on this page.”

1. Demonstrate as students navigate with you. Scroll down to Start Here and click on first link. Point out the name of the website that opens, explaining that it has opened in a new tab. Let students read some of the information there silently.
2. Show students how to close the tab and/or return to the **Arthritis** page.
3. Ask students to return to the **Home Page** by clicking on Home at the top of their screen.

### **Group Practice Activity**

“Let’s practice finding information on a health topic together.”

Handout 1: Find Information on a Health Topic

**Independent Practice Activity.** Let students work on their own using Handout 1. After they are finished with Handout 1, ask if they have any questions.

“Now you’ll have an opportunity to practice finding information on your own using one of the health topics you wrote down at the beginning of the class.”

Handout 2: Search for Your Own Health Topic

- 1 Read each of the steps on **Handout 2** to the class to familiarize them with the activity.
- 2 Ask students to choose one of the health issues they wrote down earlier in the class.
- 3 Start students off by doing the first couple of steps of the exercise on **Handout 2** together as a class. Then let them search on their own for information about their selected topic.
- 4 Once students have completed the exercise, ask them which searching tasks were easy and which ones may have caused them difficulty.

### **THE SEARCH MEDLINEPLUS BOX (8 Minutes)**

“Now we will work on using the **Search MedlinePlus Box**. There are other ways to search for a health topic. One way is by using the **Search Box**.”

- 1 Point out the **Search MedlinePlus Box** again.
- 2 Demonstrate for students how to use the **Search MedlinePlus Box**. Type in the name of a disease or condition (i.e., gout) on your computer projector. Click on Go (or hit the Enter key). Point out that the information on this page is arranged differently from the **Health Topics** page.
- 3 Ask students to type in the name of the disease or condition they researched in their independent practice activity into the **Search MedlinePlus Box**, and click on Go (or hit Enter).
- 4 Let them scroll the page to see how information is arranged. Point out the summary and the list of results underneath it. Show students how they can search beyond the first list of results by scrolling to the bottom of the list and clicking on the numbers for the next pages.
- 5 Point out the “Refine by Type” and “Refine by Format” sections and tell them these are ways for them to narrow their search.
- 6 Let them click on a link and scan the information they find there.

## SUMMARIZING (7 Minutes)

“Let’s do a final exercise to bring together the skills we’ve learned today.”

**1** Choose a health topic (i.e., hypertension) and have students lead **you** through an information search about the disease.

**2** Starting at the **Home Page**, ask students the following questions. As they provide each answer, demonstrate for them by clicking on the appropriate link at your computer projector.

A. “Where do I click to find the definition of hypertension?”

*(Answer: Click on Medical Dictionary and show how to find the definition.)*

B. “Where do I click to find general information about hypertension?”

*(Answer: Click on Health Topics.)*

C. “Which link do I click on in the **Health Topics** page to find out about hypertension?”

*(Answer: Click the letter “H” and scroll down to hypertension. OR, click on the category “Blood, Heart and Circulation,” and scroll down to hypertension.)*

D. “How do I to return to the **Home Page**?”

*(Answer: Click on Home)*

**3** Address any final questions students may have.

“Remember, always check with your doctor or health care provider about health information you find on the Internet.”

## MedlinePlus Drugs and Supplements, Medical Encyclopedia

### THINKING About Medical Issues (5 Minutes)

“Before we look more deeply at the website, I’d like to have you jot down some information.”

**Pass out Handout 3: Thinking about Medical Issues.**

**1** Ask students to complete the handout.

### THE DRUGS AND SUPPLEMENTS PAGE (5 Minutes)

“Now we’ll move to learning how to find information on a drug. If you want to find out about a drug, start with the **Drugs and Supplements** button.”

Ask Students to navigate along with you:

**1** Click on Drugs and Supplements. Tell students they can find information on a drug by going to the alphabet that appears under **Drugs** and clicking on the first letter of the drug.

**2** How to find information on **Aspirin**:

- Under **Drugs**, click on A in the alphabet.

- Scroll down to Aspirin and click on it.

**3** Scroll down, pointing out the features of the **Aspirin** page:

- A Table of Contents with hyperlinked titles

- Sub-headings for various categories of data

4 Once you get to the **Aspirin** page, pause and give students time to read some of the information they see.

#### **Handout 4: Find Information on a Drug**

Ask students to complete the handout. When they are finished, ask if they have any questions.

“Now we will move to learning how to find information on a supplement. If you want to find out about a supplement, start with the **Drugs and Supplements** button.”

Ask students to navigate along with you.

**1** Show students how to find information on Resveratrol. Starting from the **Home Page**, click on Drugs and Supplements:

- Under **Herbs and Supplements**, click on All Herbs and Supplements.
- Click on **Resveratrol**.

**2** Scroll down to the bottom, pointing out the features of the page.

- A Table of Contents with hyperlinked titles
- Sub-headings for various categories of information.
- The studies under Evidence, and their grade rankings (*explained after the last study*).

**3** Once you get to the page, pause and give students time to read some of the information they see.

#### **Independent Practice Activity (10 Minutes)**

“Now you’ll have an opportunity to practice finding information on drugs and supplements of interest to you.”

#### **Pass out Handout 5: Search For Your Own Medication or Supplement.**

**1** Read each of the steps on **Handout 5** to the class to familiarize them with the activity. Then, ask students to complete the exercise on their own.

**2** Ask them what was easy and what may have been more difficult about the exercise.

**3** Clear up any questions students may have

#### **The Medical Encyclopedia (5 Minutes)**

“Now we’ll move to learning how to use the **Medical Encyclopedia**. The **Medical Encyclopedia** on **MedlinePlus** has information about diseases, tests, symptoms, injuries, and surgeries.”

**1** Students’ screens should be on the **Home Page**.

**2** Demonstrate as students navigate with you. Click on the Medical Encyclopedia link at the bottom of the page and look up information about a medical test – a colonoscopy.

**3** Using the alphabet, locate and click on C. Scroll down to Colonoscopy and click on it.

- 4** As you scroll down the **Colonoscopy** page, describe its various features, pointing out:
- The sub-headings and categories of information
  - The boxes on the right containing a link to the same topic on another part of the MedlinePlus website, images of a colonoscopy, and links to other related topics.

To find information about another topic in the Medical Encyclopedia, scroll up to the alphabet at the top of the page where you can start another search.

### **Independent Practice Activity (10 Minutes)**

“Now, you’ll have an opportunity to practice finding information on your own using the **Medical Encyclopedia**.”

### **Refer to Handout 3: Thinking about Medical Issues.**

- 1** Refer students to questions 3 and 4 on **Handout 3**, and ask them to use the **Medical Encyclopedia** to find an answer to their question. Ask them to write down the answer at the bottom of **Handout 3**.
- 2** Ask them what was easy and what may have been more difficult about the exercise.
- 3** Clear up any questions students may have.

## Multimedia

### **ACCESSING MEDLINEPLUS MULTIMEDIA —VIDEOS (5 Minutes)**

“Now we will move to learning how to access multimedia on MedlinePlus. This includes videos, tutorials, calculators, podcasts, quizzes, and games about health. We will start with videos”.

- 1** On the Home Page, click on Videos and Tools.
- 2** Read aloud the introductory paragraph describing what is available in this section.
- 3** Start by pointing out and describing the video sections on the page:
  - A. Health Videos:** View videos of anatomy and body systems and how diseases and conditions affect them.
  - C. Surgery Videos**—Find videos of operations and surgical procedures.
- 4** Using a **Health Video** as an example, show students how to play, pause, stop, and mute the video.
- 5** Point out the slider that fast forwards or rewinds the video.
- 6** Point out the open captioning that is available to aid understanding.

### **ACCESSING MEDLINEPLUS MULTIMEDIA – HEALTH CHECK TOOLS (10 Minutes)**

“Now let’s look at calculators, quizzes, and questionnaires.”

- 1 Demonstrate as students navigate with you. On the **Home Page**, click on Videos and Tools.
- 2 Point out the **Health Check Tools** section. Show students how to see the full list of calculators and quizzes by clicking on All Calculators and Quizzes.
- 3 Select ONE calculator or quiz to focus on. Ones that might be useful for older adults include:
  - **Build Your Question List**
  - **Calculate Your Body Mass Index**
  - **Cholesterol IQ Quiz**
- 4 Show students how to use the selected calculator or quiz.  
After you get them started, let them proceed on their own, providing them with assistance where needed.
- 5 If there is time, show them how to use another calculator or tutorial.
- 6 When they have finished, respond to any questions.
- 7 Ask students to return to the **Home Page**.

## Handout 1: Find Information on a Health Topic

1. On the **Home Page**, click on Health Topics.
2. Looking at the alphabet, click on the letter “H.”
3. Scroll down the list until you get to Hip Replacement.
4. Click on Hip Replacement.
5. You should now be on the **Hip Replacement** page.
6. Scroll down to Start Here.
7. Click on any link. A window will open to another website.
8. What is the name of this website?
  
9. Browse the information on this site for 3-4 minutes.
10. Write down something new you find about hip replacement.
  
11. Exit this website. (Hint: Click on the **X** in the upper right-hand corner of this window.)
12. You should be back on the **Hip Replacement** page.
13. Scroll to the top of the screen. Find the **Home** link at the top of the screen on the left and click on it to return to the **Home Page**.

## Handout 2: Search for Your Own Health Topic

1. Recall one of the health topics you wrote down at the start of the class.
2. From the **Home Page**, click on Health Topics.
3. Using the alphabet, find the first letter of your topic and click on it. (Or, if you wish, use the “Categories” section just below the alphabet, and click on the category for your topic.)
4. Scroll down until you find your topic, and click on it (or, if you see a picture of the human body, click on the part of the picture that represents your topic.)
5. You should now be on the page for your health topic.
6. Scroll down to Start Here.
7. Under Start Here, click on any link. A window will open to another website.
8. What is the name of this website?
  
9. Browse the information you find there for about 3-4 minutes.
10. Write down one new thing you learned about your health topic.
  
11. Exit this website and return to **MedlinePlus** by clicking on the **X** in the upper right-hand corner of the **inside** window.
12. Scroll to the top of the screen. Find the **Home** link at the top of the screen on the left and click on it to return to the **Home Page**.

## Handout 3: Thinking About Medical Issues

1. Many people are interested in knowing more about drugs and supplements (i.e., vitamins, herbs) on the market today. Name one drug and one supplement (or herb) you would like more information about.

Drug:

Supplement:

2. What specifically would you like to know about:

The drug?

The supplement?

3. Name a disease/condition, a medical test, OR a type of surgery that you would like to have more information about. (Choose only one of the blanks to fill in.)

Disease/condition:

**OR**

Medical Test:

**OR**

Type of Surgery:

4. What would you like to know about this subject?

5. (Leave blank until later in the lesson.)

## Handout 4: Find Information on a Drug

### Drugs – Captopril

1. On the **Home Page**, click on Drugs and Supplements.
2. You should be on the **Drugs and Supplements** page.
3. Under **Drugs**, go to the alphabet and click on the letter C.
4. Find the drug Captopril.
5. Click on Captopril.
6. You should now be on the Captopril page.
7. Read down the page and answer these questions:

**What is Captopril prescribed for?**

**What are the special dietary instructions for someone who takes Captopril?**

**What is one possible side effect?**

8. Scroll up to the top of the page.
9. Click on the **Drugs and Supplements** button.
10. You should now be back on the **Drugs and Supplements** page.

## Handout 5: Search for Your Own Medication or Supplement

1. Look at **Handout 3** to recall the drug or the supplement you wrote down in step #2 and the question(s) you wanted answered.
2. On the **Home Page** click on Drugs and Supplements.
3. Scroll down to **Drugs OR Herbs and Supplements** to start your search.
4. If you are searching for a drug, go to the alphabet under Drugs, and click on the first letter of the drug. Then find the drug and click on it.
5. If you are searching for a supplement, go to **Herbs and Supplements** and click on All herbs and supplements. Then click on the supplement.
6. You should now be on the page for the drug or supplement.
7. Scroll down and scan or read the page until you find the answers to your questions.
8. Write the answers in the space below.
  
9. When you are finished, scroll back up to the top of the page.
10. Click on the **Home** link to return to the **Home Page**.