

Alberta Doctors' Digest

10 reasons to use MyHealth.Alberta.ca

Busy physicians are frequently asked for medical information by patients, learners and colleagues. I am, of course, no different and have recently taken note of which website (s) I tend to recommend more often to those looking for quality health information.

I discovered that very often I default to one local resource. While I have mentioned MyHealth.Alberta.ca in previous issues, I would like to point out 10 reasons we should all consider using and recommending this website.

Reason 1

“This site was built by the Alberta Government and Alberta Health Services to give Albertans one place to go for *health information they can trust*. Health care experts across the province make sure the information is correct, up to date, and written for people who live in Alberta.” The website is actively curated and updated regularly. (myhealth.alberta.ca/pages/About-Us.aspx)

Reason 2

The site contains an easy-to-use, point-and-click *symptom checker* for those patients who would like early advice on how to manage common health care problems. Using this tool gives patients management advice based on symptoms with hyperlinks to related topics including home treatment and prevention. (myhealth.alberta.ca/health/Pages/Symptom-Checker.aspx)

Reason 3

Finding health care facilities, programs and services available through AHS is made somewhat simpler using the tool provided. (www.albertahealthservices.ca/findhealth/default.aspx?source=mha)

Reason 4

Emergency wait times are available in real time. (<http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/waittimes/waittimes.aspx>)

Reason 5

An extensive, informative, searchable *video library* is available. For example, there are more than 20 videos related to pain, including *Living with Chronic Pain* and several on how to deal with back pain. These videos are created for patients and are generally well done, and brief (less than five minutes). (myhealth.alberta.ca/health/Pages/HealthVideoPlayer.aspx#)

Reason 6

There are patient care handouts on more than 2,600 topics, with more added regularly. Need a handout for sleep problems in babies or fibromyalgia? Just type in a few letters and the information is quickly available with functionality to email or print. (myhealth.alberta.ca/health/aftercareinformation/Pages/default.aspx)

Reason 7

Health information and interactive tools that enable informed decision making in our patients are easily accessible. Each entry is adequately referenced and includes the date reviewed and the reviewers' names. The interactive tools such as easy-to-use personal calculators are particularly interesting. For example, a universal search, available on the home page, for "shingles" yields the tool "Shingles: Should I Get a Shot to Prevent Shingles?" which walks the patient through an informed decision-making process about the vaccine.

Tools like this are sprinkled throughout the health information in the website, such as "Are You Depressed?" or "Are You Ready to Quit Smoking?" or "Should I Consider Surgery for My Low Back Pain?" These may be useful to educate our patients better while saving some valuable time. A search for "interactive tools" yields more than 200 different tools available within the database. (myhealth.alberta.ca/search/Pages/results.aspx?k=Interactive%20tools)

Reason 8

An extensive collection of up-to-date patient information on medications is available, with an efficient search feature that allows the user to find almost any medication in seconds. (myhealth.alberta.ca/health/medications/Pages/default.aspx)

Reason 9

Information on hundreds of tests and treatments ranging from abdominal MRI to catheter ablation for tachycardia to T4 test to cognitive-behavioral therapy for pain management is readily available. (myhealth.alberta.ca/health/tests-treatments/Pages/default.aspx)

Reason 10

Up-to-date health advisories, including local potential health issues and information on disease outbreaks around the world through the Public Health Agency of Canada, are readily available. The website even contains information on restaurant inspections so users can "find out whether your favorite eatery makes the grade." (myhealth.alberta.ca/alerts/Pages/default.aspx)

Summary

Future development of the MyHealth.Alberta.ca website promises to include a personal health record which will allow patients to track height, weight, allergies, conditions and more. Information from the provincial electronic health record will allow patient access to a list of medications and some lab test results.

The extensive information provided and curated by local experts and the website's usability combine to potentially make it an extremely useful tool in our busy lives. A few minutes spent exploring it now will likely pay dividends in the future.