



## Women's health and the Internet

A 1994 study by the Medical Research Council of Canada revealed a serious lack of research funding and scientific work devoted to women's health issues. Much has been done to address this shortcoming since then, and at the same time many Internet-based services devoted to women's health care have appeared.

In 1996, in response to the MRC report, Health Canada started funding 5 centres of excellence for women's health ([www.cwhn.ca/cewhp-pcesf/index.html](http://www.cwhn.ca/cewhp-pcesf/index.html)), which were supposed to jump start this type of research.

The new research "hives" are the BC Centre of Excellence for Women's Health ([www.cwhn.ca/cewhp-pcesf/bccewh.html](http://www.cwhn.ca/cewhp-pcesf/bccewh.html)), the Prairie Women's Health Centre of Excellence in Winnipeg ([www.cwhn.ca/cewhp-pcesf/pwhce.html](http://www.cwhn.ca/cewhp-pcesf/pwhce.html)), the National Network on Environments and Women's Health in Toronto ([www.cwhn.ca/cewhp-pcesf/nnewh.html](http://www.cwhn.ca/cewhp-pcesf/nnewh.html)), Le Centre d'excellence pour la santé des femmes - Consortium Université de Montréal ([www.cwhn.ca/cewhp-pcesf/cesaf.html](http://www.cwhn.ca/cewhp-pcesf/cesaf.html)) and the Halifax-based Maritime Centre of Excellence for Women's Health ([www.medicine.dal.ca/mcewh/](http://www.medicine.dal.ca/mcewh/)).

The Web site for the Halifax centre is typical of these endeavours, with visitors finding information on the underlying social, economic and cultural factors that have an impact upon the health of Canadian women over their life span.

Some of the centre's current research involves the health and well-being of black women and the health and economic implications of the proposed federal home-care program.

The centre also operates an online

discussion group, MCEWH-L. To sign up send an email message to: [mailserv@ac.dal.ca](mailto:mailserv@ac.dal.ca). Leave the subject line blank, and in the main body type: **subscribe MCEWH-L**.

The Canadian Women's Health Network ([www.cwhn.ca/](http://www.cwhn.ca/)) is a national effort aimed at improving the distribution of information. Funded by women's groups across the country, the CWHN is building regional and national links between organizations and individuals involved in or concerned about women's health.

The goal is to increase access to health information for women, help connect people to these data and advocate for women in health care planning and research. This site has information resources, listed from A to Z ([www.cwhn.ca/resource/index.html](http://www.cwhn.ca/resource/index.html)), on everything from abortion clinics and hormone replacement therapy to a yeast-infection home page.

The Winnipeg Women's Health Clinic ([www.pangea.ca/whc/](http://www.pangea.ca/whc/)) is a "feminist, community-based health centre offering a range of services to women from teens to elders." Started in 1981, the WHC offers a wide range of information and services.

This site also offers an excellent article on hormone replacement therapy ([www.pangea.ca/whc/hrt-mbwm.wpd.htm](http://www.pangea.ca/whc/hrt-mbwm.wpd.htm)). It attempts to explain the chemistry involved and looks at both the pros and cons of opting for this type of therapy.

And finally, Health Canada maintains a small section of women's health resources as part of its general collection ([www.hc-sc.gc.ca:80/english/azindex.htm#women](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca:80/english/azindex.htm#women)).

Looking beyond Canada's borders, the Internet Mining Company is one of many "virtual libraries" available on the Net. It offers an exhaustive collection of resources on many topics, and its Women's Health Page ([women-](http://women-)

[shealth.miningco.com/maward.htm](http://shealth.miningco.com/maward.htm)) will point visitors to specific subjects, all of which have full-text material. The articles include: "What you should expect when your visit your gynecologist" and "Tests, diagnostic procedures, and lab work results and their meanings."


Although most resources available on the Internet target the general public, some are aimed at professionals. The Doctor's Guide to the Internet has a section aimed at physicians, and includes an alphabetical listing of current news ([www.pslgroup.com/dg/allnews.htm](http://www.pslgroup.com/dg/allnews.htm)). Some of these topics relate to women's health.

Women's Health, Peer Reviewed Resources ([www.ama-assn.org/special/womh/womh.htm](http://www.ama-assn.org/special/womh/womh.htm)) is an excellent site maintained by the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. It offers a searchable selection of peer-reviewed articles.

Finally, there is the American Medical Women's Association ([www.amwa-doc.org/](http://www.amwa-doc.org/)), which represents more than 10 000 female physicians and medical students. This site includes articles dealing with the aging process in women, staying fit, diabetes, violence and strategies for improving emotional well-being. —

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