

Parents who go online for pediatric health information are open to doctors' website recommendations

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While parents commonly use the Internet to learn about pediatric health problems, little is known about how often they seek out this information, and how they use it prior to seeking medical care.

In the research abstract, "[Internet Usage](#) by Parents Prior to Seeking Care at a [Pediatric Emergency Department](#)," presented Friday, Oct. 14, at the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) National Conference and Exhibition (NCE) in Boston, researchers interviewed 262 parents or guardians who brought their child to an urban emergency department about whether they used the Internet as a resource for [medical information](#) about their child's illness or injury before making the decision to visit the emergency department (ED).

Investigators found that 11.8 percent of these parents said they went to the Internet seeking medical information about their child's condition within 24 hours prior to visiting the ED. Of these parents, 29 percent were more certain they needed to visit the ED after obtaining information on the Internet, and 19 percent were less certain. Parents most commonly named WebMD and [Wikipedia](#) as the websites visited. Among parents who reported having access to the internet (88%), over half reported searching the Internet for general pediatric health information at least once in the past three months. When specifically asked about common medical websites, few parents acknowledged visiting the Centers for Disease Control website, <http://www.cdc.gov> (16

percent) or the AAP Healthy Children website, <http://www.healthychildren.org> (10 percent) in the last three months.

However, the majority of parent Internet users expressed a high likelihood of visiting a website that was recommended by a doctor.

"These findings suggest that for some parents, Web-based medical information accessed prior to an ED visit influences understanding and decision making about ED use," said study lead author Purvi Shroff, MD. "In addition, parents are interested in online sources for [pediatric health](#) information recommended by physicians."

Provided by American Academy of Pediatrics

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