



Searching the Internet

(including a list of selected HIV Websites)

Searching the internet allows you to access a vast and ever changing source of information, which some can find confusing. The **world wide web** (the *web*) comprises a huge variety of corporations, government agencies, educational facilities, groups and individuals. Anyone with access to the Internet and an internet service provider (*ISP*) can post their own web pages on the web for the world to view. This means that literally millions of pages of data are generated and accessible across the network at any time.

BROWSERS. The most commonly used software – *browsers* – to search the Internet are **Microsoft's Internet Explorer, Netscape's Navigator, Linux, Mozilla Firefox** and **Opera**. These *browsers* work in the similar ways by providing all the resources needed to access and navigate – *surf* – pages on the web.

SEARCH ENGINES. The Internet is a place where you can find virtually any piece of information with a little patience. Search tools are an integral part of this process.

In order to make sense of this vast information network, many organisations have developed tools to catalogue pages. These tools are called *search engines* and are an essential starting point for anyone wanting to browse the web. While many of the ISPs have their own search engines built into their homepages, there are also many located on a webpage of their own. Popular ones are www.google.co.uk ; www.altavista.com ; www.excite.com ; www.lycos.com ; www.yahoo.com ; www.webcrawler.com ; and www.ask.co.uk .

GETTING STARTED. You can go directly to a specific organisation or search engine by typing the *web address* or *URL* (**U**niform **R**esource **L**ocator) in the address bar of the browser. Most web addresses begin with *http://www* so the only part you have to type is what comes after the *www*. The address usually appears in small case letters.

To search for information, you must click on the search icon or button usually found on the main menu bar along the top of the screen. The main search will then be loaded up onto the computer and be displayed. All of the search tools operate on similar principles, but have some notable differences in the way in which they catalogue web pages. The titles they display are links to other pages, so you can just click and go. If you don't like what you find there, just click the back button on the tool bar and you will return to the previous screen.

It is important that you be as specific as possible when searching for information. Many search engines use a system called Boolean Logic (i.e. AND, OR, NOT, WITH etc, in some browsers the AND & OR may return false results.) to help narrow down the scope of the search. For example, typing HIV into the search window will return a result of many thousands of pages, which may have no relevance to the particular aspect of HIV you are researching. If however, you type HIV and CMV or HIV+CMV, this will reduce the search and increase the chances of finding the pages you require. Typing "HIV Cardiff" will define the search exactly as within the quote marks. Remember: the more specifically you outline your search, the better your chance of finding what you want. As for sites about HIV-related information, some reputable sites are listed below.

A note of caution. Since there is little policing of the web, be aware that not everything that is published is true. Be careful what kind of personal information you provide, because not everyone is looking out for your best interest.

Selected HIV-related websites

INFORMATION SITES

Information Exchange – Part of the Chelsea and Westminster Healthcare. Good HIV fact sheets.
www.ststephensvolunteers.org.uk

AIDSmap – Information on HIV medication, treatment and research, plus links to other websites.
www.aidsmap.com

HIV i-base - HIV treatment information for healthcare professionals and HIV-positive people.
www.i-base.info

Project Inform – US site with good fact sheets and reprints. Multimedia section containing interviews of patients talking about treatment issues and living with HIV.
www.projinf.org

AIDS Treatment Data Network – US site with good range of simple fact sheets.
www.atdn.org

STATISTICS, NEWS and SEARCH ENGINE SITES

UNAIDS – Global reports by Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS.
www.unaids.org

AVERT – UK AIDS Statistics as well as good selection of publications.
www.avert.org

CDC – US Centre for Disease Control. Daily news abstracts.
www.cdcnpin.org

The Body - Bulletin Boards on HIV-related topics and search engine.
www.thebody.com

AEGIS- AIDS Education and global information system. Fact sheets and search engine.
www.aegis.com

PUBLICATIONS

Positive Nation – Monthly publication covering all aspects of HIV, treatment news, articles, interviews and a large list of other sites. Back copies are available.

www.positivenation.co.uk

POZ magazine – US magazine with news, personal articles. Back copies available.
www.poz.com

AIDS – journal of the international AIDS Society. Free access to scientific articles over 12 months old.
www.aidsonline.com

CO-INFECTION

HIV and Hepatitis.com
www.hivandhepatitis.com

SUPPORT

Terrence Higgins Trust -- National Gateway to HIV services, support and information.
www.tht.org.uk

Positive East – Peer and professional support.
www.positiveeast.org.uk

Positively Women – Information on women and HIV for service users, staff and general public.
www.positivelywomen.org.uk

CWAC – Children with AIDS charity.
www.cwac.org

PPC – Positive Parenting and Children.
www.ppclondon.org.uk

ACIA – African Community Involvement Association.
www.acia-uk.org

NAZ Project London – Sexual health, HIV prevention and support services for black and minority ethnic communities (BME) in London.
www.naz.org.uk

OTHER LANGUAGES

European AIDS Treatment Group – French, German, Greek, Italian, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish.
<http://www.eatg.org>

Canadian AIDS Treatment Information Exchange – Dual site in English and French.
<http://www.catie.ca/>

New Mexico AIDS InfoNet – Dual site in English and Spanish.
<http://www.aidsinfonyet.org>

This information was produced by the Information Exchange of the HIV/GU Medicine Directorate of the Chelsea and Westminster NHS Foundation Trust. For more information please call 020 8746 5929. Updated February 2008