Reach Dane Health Blast 4/23

Getting the Facts on COVID (and other medical information) Online

The SARS-COV-2 virus (COVID19) is still very new to scientists, doctors and the health care system. What we know about it is changing every day and things that we first thought about the virus have also changed. You may be sorting through lots of information, and some misinformation. As with all medical information, we encourage you to look carefully at the source before accepting any information as fact.

What is the website?
Does the website end in .com, .org, .edu, .gov? A simple website address can give you a lot of information and the people who post the information may have a personal stake with what is being shared on their site. For example, sites that sell a vitamin might say that this vitamin has helped people who have been sick, even though there might not be any evidence that it’s true. Sites that end with .com means commercial and might have bias or an ulterior motive for their information. For COVID (and all medical information), we encourage you to use websites that end with .edu (universities and colleges), .gov (government) or .org (organizations). If a website has an “about us” on it, you can look to see what the purpose of the website is. If it’s a website that is selling products or services, then there may be a lot of misleading information to help sell these services/products.

Who wrote the article?
Was the article written by a doctor, nurse or medical professional? Was the information on a personal blog? Remember that just because a person is a doctor, does not mean that they are an expert in the material presented. For example, would you trust Dr. Phil (Who is a psychologist and never went to medical school) to know the specifics about COVID? We need to make sure that we are getting our information from the experts in their field.

How current is the article?
The things we know about COVID change daily. If you read an article with information on it from January, the specifics of what we know may have changed a lot since then. For example, doctors were testing “promising” treatments in January that we have since learned are not effective.

So where can I find good information?
If you find information on social media (Facebook, Instagram, etc.), it’s a good idea to verify that this information is true from another reliable source. Below are some good sources you can go to for the most up-to-date information:

- National Institutes of Health COVID site: https://www.nih.gov/health-information/coronavirus
- University of Wisconsin Global Health Initiative COVID: https://ghi.wisc.edu/covid-19/
- Johns Hopkins University Coronavirus Resource page: https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html
- Public Health Madison Dane County Coronavirus page: https://www.publichealthmdc.com/coronavirus