You’ve Got AIDS

April 1, 2000 By Shana Naomi Krochmal

They all look alike at first glance—big, flashy websites with more bells and whistles than you could ever bookmark. Some are designed for deep-diving HIVers, while others are best for friends and family just testing the water:

CBSHealthWatch
cbs.healthwatch.com
Plug-in: Requires an e-mail address and name—but who says it has to be yours? The member profile (optional) is visible to all users. To access the Message Center, you must provide demographic info, including insurance company and pharmacy names.
Rundown: Once registered, you can search through MEDLINE articles and Reuters health news as well as enroll in a “mini medical school.”
Community: Search for “HIV” in member profiles to meet poz folks. Share your own story in the forum.
Extras: Send QuickNotes or long messages to fellow members. Enter Rx refills and doctor appointments on the calendar.
Best for: HIVers looking for news, basic online support and connections with others. Also good for allies looking to beef up their HIV knowledge.
Score: Uber-user-friendly, but not always aware of its audience. Consider this **Health Hint:** “Did you know about two-thirds of the people with AIDS in the United States got the disease during sexual intercourse with an infected partner? This means that many of these people could have avoided the disease by using condoms.” Sour grapes? 4 out of 5.

WebMD
my.webmd.com
Plug-in: Name, e-mail address and health insurance carrier.
Rundown: News, chats and daily multimedia broadcasts.
Community: WebMD (which occasionally copresents chats with *POZ*) has seven HIV message boards.
Extras: MyHealthRecord—what the future of online health management looks like. Enter your full medical history—including prescriptions, food and drug allergies, doctor contact information—on a guaranteed secure server. It’s even possible to grant secure access to docs, pharmacists or treatment buddies so you don’t have to keep repeating the whole spiel. You can also print your full records to take to a new specialist. Great for keeping track of kids’ or a busy (lazy?) partner’s treatment.
Best for: Skilled web-using HIVers will get the most out of this site; for newbies, the weekly e-mail

newsletter is a good place to start. Multi-media options require some Net know-how, and you've gotta have faith in web security (WebMD has been approved by TrustE, an Internet security evaluator). Score: The more online hours you've clocked, the more WebMD will do for you. 5.

Thrive Online
www.thriveonline.com
Plug-in: No registration, except for chat and message boards, which require a nickname and password.
Rundown: The health arm of Oprah Winfrey's Oxygen network, this site is geared toward women. Fact sheets about HIV, transmission and drug therapy. Search for news and health info. Community: Message boards are fairly active and lively.
Extras: Interactive polls include great explanations of complex issues. The oral-sex- transmission fact sheet wins the red ribbon as the most explicit and helpful prevention info in the crowd.
Best for: Gal-pals.
Score: Part of a larger women's online community with potential for revolutionary HIV resources. 3.

Other options
For online HIVers, your best bet might be to go right to pages with more specific info. Two old reliables, **www.aegis.com** and **HIVInSite.ucsf.edu**, offer 10 times the information found at any corporate health site. If the e-adherence helpers now available at some sites sound like your thing, check out the HIVer-owned www.medimom.com, which sends unlimited reminders about meds and appointments to your choice of electronic device (pager, phone, e-mail—or all three) for $14.95 a month.

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http://beta.docker.poz.com/article/You-8217-ve-Got-AIDS-10442-2300