

# NHS Choices website

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

- To understand what information and advice is available on the NHS Choices website
- To know how to access and search the NHS Choices website to find answers to questions



## RESOURCES

- Copies of Resources 1–4
- Self-help guides, leaflets and other sources of written information (see list in 'Engage' below).
- Ideally, Internet access, using a whiteboard or large screen for demonstration and at least one computer with access per two learners.
- Cards / sticky notes with key words to be devised by teacher (Activity 1 ESOL)
- Gapped instructions to be devised by teacher (Activity 2 ESOL)

- Cards / sticky notes with key words to be devised by teacher (Activity 3 Support)

It is advisable to check web addresses etc. before the session

## RELATED THEMES

*Change4Life* (pages 82–90)

Telephone helplines (pages 91–109)

Information sources (pages 227–232)

Use the Internet to find information (File 1, pages 335–344)

## HEALTH SKILLS

Many non-serious health problems can be treated at home; but understandably people need both reassurance that self-care is appropriate, and advice about the form this should take.

More and more people have access to the Internet and use it to find information. NHS Choices provides information about a range of health-related topics, as well as illnesses, through the website and a dedicated NHS Direct helpline: 0845 4647. This theme helps learners understand the information available online through NHS Choices and enables them to practise finding specific information.

### Related health information

[www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk/](http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk/)

[www.nhs.uk/](http://www.nhs.uk/)

[www.bbc.co.uk/health/conditions/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/health/conditions/)

<http://www.nhs.uk/Change4life/>

## SKILLS FOR LIFE

In order to use the extensive services available online, learners need to be able to:

- understand the way websites are organised
- use headings and links to access information
- scan for information
- read carefully for understanding.

Note: This theme assumes that learners have basic IT skills and can access the Internet. Support will be needed for those learners who are new to this. Use the Internet to find information (File 1, pages 335–344) may be a good place to start.

### Core curriculum

Activities in this theme will contribute to learning in the following curriculum areas:

- use a range of reading strategies to find and obtain information (L Rt/L1.5)
- use the features of text and the way it is organised to find information (L Rt/L1.4).

- Give learners some examples of scenarios where people may be concerned about a situation or condition but are unsure whether to call the doctor or access emergency services (e.g. a child with vomiting and a high temperature; an adult with chest pains; a child with persistent stomach pain on a Saturday night; advice about flu).
- Ask learners for their suggestions on who to call, and how / where to find out more.
- Display suggestions about sources of information and advice that are available at any time of the day or weekend. These may include:
  - NHS Direct website
  - NHS Direct telephone helpline
  - NHS Choices website
  - other websites, e.g. BBC, *Change4Life* or specialised support organisations (e.g. for cancer or mental health)
  - GP out of hours service
  - self-help guides and leaflets (these may include NHS guides or other specialised support organisations)
  - first aid manuals
  - digital TV
  - friends and family
  - PALS (Patient Advice and Liaison Services).
- Learners with specific long-term conditions may already be aware of helplines or support networks related to their condition. Some learners may have mentors or key workers who offer support and advice. Include these on the list as appropriate.
- Explain that NHS Direct services provide 24-hour advice via a website and telephone helpline. You may need to discuss what 'NHS' stands for, what services it provides and how it is paid for. Note that Topic 1: 'The NHS and other support networks' helps with this.
- Check learners' knowledge and experience of using the Internet. Note that not all learners will have personal access to equipment or Internet access, though many may have access via other contacts, e.g. friends, via day centres or community access. Not all Internet users will be familiar with using sites for finding health information. Most – though not necessarily all – are likely to be able to access telephone helplines. File 1, Topic 6 Theme 2: *Use the Internet to find information* focuses on the structure of web pages and how to locate information on sites.

*When should you seek medical advice?*

*Where can you get advice if you are worried about your health?*

*Have any of you ever used the NHS Direct website for advice about health?*

#### ACTIVITY 1

##### Explore the NHS Choices website home page

- Explain to learners that you are going to look in detail at the NHS Choices website as a source of information. Establish that this can be a good place to find out about local services, to check symptoms and find information about health issues, such as smoking, alcohol, pregnancy, and current health issues (e.g. seasonal illnesses, health items in the news). Explain that the NHS Direct site and helpline are for direct advice and support and can be accessed via the NHS Choices site. There is a huge amount of advice and information available on these sites and it will take some time to explore

*Do you know the NHS Choices web address?*

them fully. Demonstrate typing in the web address [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) onscreen (or using an interactive whiteboard if available). Make sure the address is available to all learners and encourage them to keep it where they can use it. They may wish to add the address to a list of key contact numbers, together with the telephone number of NHS Direct.

- With the home page on-screen and Resource 1 available to all, ask learners to locate the different features shown on Resource 1. Learners can point to them on Resource 1 or on the screen. Ask: 'How can you check that you're on the right website?' 'Can you find the "Back" arrow? What will happen if I click on it?' 'What does "Home" mean? What is a "link"?' 'Can you find a list of contents?' 'What does it mean if a heading is underlined?' 'What is the search box for? How do you use it?'
- Be prepared for learners to spend some time exploring the features of the home page before starting to search for something specific. If computers are available, encourage learners to click on links and return to the home page to build confidence moving around the site.

*Have a look at the list of contents. What could I click on to find out about a specific illness?*

### Support

- Learners may be put off by the amount of information on the home page and by some of the language. Show how the home page can be broken into chunks by blanking out parts of the web page and allowing learners to focus on specific bits of information.
- Explain that it is like an index or contents page in a magazine and review scanning strategies (e.g. looking at headings; key words; pictures / graphics for clues; bullet points; summaries).
- Make sure all the key words and phrases used on the site are understood.

### ESOL

- Check understanding of words for web page features (e.g. 'search box'; 'address bar'; 'menu'; 'links'; 'back button'; etc.).
- Blank out the words in the callouts on Resource 1. Prepare some cards / sticky notes with the words. In pairs, ask learners to use them to complete the explanations.

## ACTIVITY 2

### Navigate the NHS Choices website

- Model the on-screen use of the navigation tools to answer the question 'Where is my nearest NHS dentist?' Be explicit about how you follow links, drawing attention to conventions of web-page formatting (hand cursor to indicate links, underlined links), use of the back button, etc.
- Talk learners through the process: 'This underlined link means that there's more information – I'll click on that – good, those are the opening times.' 'No, that link isn't the one I want – I'll use the back button.' Don't make moves on-screen without articulating your thoughts.
- Model the process again or ask a volunteer to demonstrate while you talk them through the process.

*What information is available on the NHS Choices website?*

*How do you work your way around the website?*

- After modelling the process again, ask learners to follow the route on Resource 2 to find the answer to the first question. (Before the session, it might be worth checking that this route works; if it does not, supply revised instructions.)
- Learners can then work in pairs to find answers to the other questions on Resource 2, or questions of their own. You may need to point out the 'Live Well' tab at the top of the page, or model the use of the 'Search' facility.

*Can you find out local information?*

### Support

- Learners may have some difficulty reading instructions and following them. Support them by reading out the instructions in Resource 2 and on screen or pairing them with a stronger reader. Explain to learners that it is good practice to read through instructions more than once.
- Reassure those who are unfamiliar with the Internet that they can always move back and start again. Model how to do this.

### ESOL

- Check learners understand instruction words for navigating pages (e.g. 'select', 'click on', 'type in', 'enter', etc.).
- Devise gap-fill instructions with the instruction words or prepositions missing (e.g. '..... the address into the address bar'; 'Click ..... the back button to go back').
- In pairs, ask learners to prepare instructions to navigate to different parts of the site. Pass these to other pairs to try out.

## ACTIVITY 3

### Use the online self-help guide

- From the home page of the NHS Choices website, direct learners towards the link for the 'Symptom checker', then the Self help guide. Click on the link to demonstrate how this works. Note that this link is sometimes on the main menu page but is also located on a tab across the top of the page: 'Medical advice'.
- Read through the information on the page together and use Resource 3 to summarise the purpose of the health and symptom checker.
  - It covers the most **common symptoms** that people call NHS Direct about.
  - It enables people to look these up for themselves using the **body map** or an **A-Z index**.
  - There is also an **encyclopaedia** section on the main menu page for further information.
  - The symptom checker will suggest one of four courses of action: **self-care, call NHS Direct, make an appointment with your GP or call 999 ambulance.**
- Ask learners to think of a scenario where they have a health concern. Demonstrate how they can click on the link to the body map and follow the links to find the information they need. Alternatively you can use the scenarios in Resource 4.
- Explain the use of the 'Yes' and 'No' buttons on the symptom checker. Ask learners to give answers as you go through the questions, and discuss the outcome.

**TIP**  
Compare the self-help guide to the website and discuss similarities. This may help some learners navigate the website.

*Have you ever been worried about someone's health but been unsure what to do about it?*

- Using the same scenario, model the route for finding information using the alphabetical index. Always articulate your actions on the computer and explain the use of links.
- If learners feel confident, ask them to search for information on the same scenario using the health encyclopaedia or 'common health questions' route (main menu page). Compare solutions.
- Give learners additional scenarios or invite suggestions. Ask them to complete a search for information in pairs using one of the methods.

*How could the NHS Choices website be useful to you?*

### Support

- Learners who lack confidence on the computer will need support to navigate the site. Encourage them to think about the key words they are looking for before they begin. Write the words down as a reminder.
- Navigating a website requires scanning techniques. Give learners additional practice on paper and onscreen by asking them to look for specific words or phrases. Provide a card or slip of paper with the key word / phrase.
- Alphabetical order may present some difficulties, although these search activities will serve as good practice. Learners at this level should be able to identify initial letters for searching.
- Learners may need support to interpret the questions in the symptom checker.
- Learners may not be familiar with names and functions of body parts and internal organs. Be prepared to spend some time on this.

### ESOL

- Learners will need help with words for parts of the body and symptoms. Prepare a body map chart (it doesn't have to be accurate or gender-specific) but without any words, and cards with the names for the body areas (e.g. 'head and neck', 'chest'; 'abdomen'; 'arms and hands' and so on).
- Ask learners to label the body diagram and then discuss and add words for associated symptoms (e.g. 'head and neck' – 'headache' / 'coughing'; 'abdomen' – 'vomiting' / 'abdominal (tummy) pain').
- Be aware of cultural sensitivities about naming sexual parts.
- The amount of vocabulary in the 'self-help' section may be daunting for many learners. Provide specific scenarios (ideally based on learners' experience) and allow time to discuss them, clarify vocabulary and pick out key words for the search (e.g. 'a child with a runny nose and high fever'; 'a woman who has had a sore throat for a couple of days'; 'a man with an aching back').
- Demonstrate finding the information for one of the scenarios. Then ask learners in pairs to choose another scenario and try out a search.

### Action

- More experienced learners can use the website to search for answers to questions of their own choosing. Encourage them to use all aspects of the website and explore possibilities. There are interactive quizzes and calculators for learners to work out their body mass index, calorie intake, alcohol intake, etc. The *Change4Life* site also has a number of ideas focussed on family health.
- The search may take learners to other websites, for cancer or child-related issues. Ask learners to keep a note of which are the most helpful sites, to share with other learners.

*What would you like to find out about the NHS Choices website?*

# NHS Choices website

## RESOURCE 1

### Using the NHS Choices home page: [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

This is the home page.

You can go back at any time by clicking on the **Back button**.

This is the **address bar**. You can check where you are or type in a new web address here.

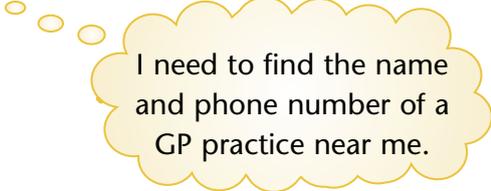
Type what you are looking for in the **search box**. The computer will search for information on this website.

The screenshot shows the NHS Choices website home page. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the NHS logo and the text 'Your health, your choices'. Below this is a search bar with the placeholder text 'Enter a search term' and a 'Search' button. The main content area is divided into several sections: 'Medical advice now' with a link to 'Get medical advice now', 'Health A-Z' with a link to 'Search the Health A-Z', and 'Also on NHS Choices' which contains a list of links. On the right side, there are featured articles, including 'Understanding dementia' and 'Weight loss blog'. The 'Also on NHS Choices' section is highlighted with a callout box explaining that it is a menu. The 'Weight loss blog' section is also highlighted with a callout box explaining that underlined headings are links.

This list is called a **menu**. It shows you what's in the website. You can click on any of these headings to find out more.

All the headings which are underlined when you roll the mouse over them are called **links**. You can click on any of these **links** to take you to another page or another website.

## Finding information on the NHS Choices website

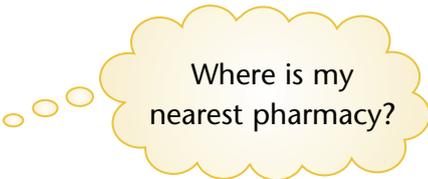


I need to find the name and phone number of a GP practice near me.

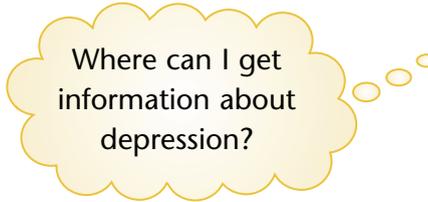
- 1 Type the address [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) into the address bar in your web browser.
- 2 Look at the box called: [Find and choose services](#)
- 3 Enter your postcode and select the **GP** check box. Then click on **Find GP practices**
- 4 A window will appear with the names and addresses of the GP practices in your area.
- 5 Click on one of the GP practices to find out more about the doctors and opening times.

## Try it yourself

Now choose one of the following questions (or another question you'd like answered) and find the answer. Write notes below to remind yourself of the route you took.



Where is my nearest pharmacy?



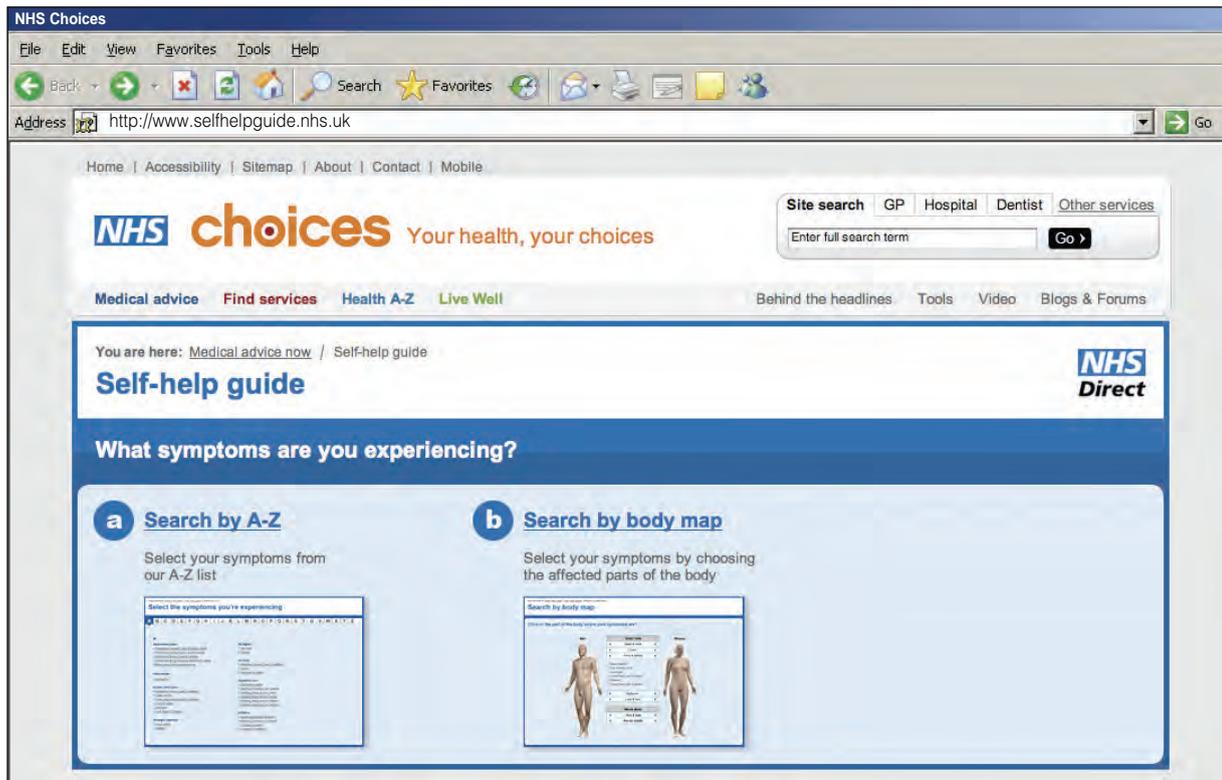
Where can I get information about depression?

Notes

## Using the NHS Choices self-help guide

You can use the self-help guide to find out more about common symptoms such as toothache, high temperature, back pain or being sick.

You can search for information in two different ways.



You will be given one of the following three courses of action.



### See your GP

You need to make an appointment to see your own doctor, who will check your symptoms.



### Self care

It is safe to manage this problem yourself at home.



### Call NHS Direct

An NHS Direct nurse will advise you on whether you need medical attention and, if you do, how quickly you should get help.



### Dial 999

Seek emergency help immediately, ring 999 and ask for an ambulance.

- 1 Your child has a nasty **cough**, a **runny nose** and **high fever**.



- 2 You have a **headache** which has come on gradually but has now lodged behind your eye. You have already taken full-strength painkillers but they haven't helped much.



- 3 You have had a **sore throat** for a couple of days which doesn't seem to be clearing. You don't have any other particular symptoms, but your throat is so sore you are having **difficulty swallowing**.



- 4 You have a friend staying who has just been **sick** and is complaining of severe **stomach pains**.



- 5 Your partner has been feeling ill all week. He / she has a **high fever**, has been **sneezing** constantly for several days, and is complaining of general **aches and pains**.



- 6 Your **back is aching** after doing some DIY. You're not sure if you've pulled something or if it's just your muscles complaining about the hard work.



There are no audio scripts for this theme.

## ACTIVITY 2 / Resource 2

*Note that these responses are correct at the time of going to press. The specific links and routes to locate information may change with time and it would be wise to check them.*

**Q: Where is my nearest pharmacy?**

- Go to [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk).
- Roll mouse over the tab 'Find and choose services'.
- Roll down to 'Pharmacies' and click there.
- Enter your postcode, location or practice name. Then click on **Search**.
- A window will appear with the names and addresses of the pharmacies in your area.
- Click on the numbers at the bottom of the window to see other pharmacies in your area.

**Q: Where can I get information about depression?**

- Go to [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk).
- Roll the mouse over the tab 'Live Well' and click on 'Depression'.
- Look at the page and select the topic you need to know about.