

# Healthy & Helpful Web Sites

From online medical information to farm safety tips, these web sites offer a wealth of health information.

by **Kindra Gordon**

The Internet can be a great resource for delivering daily news, the weather forecast and market reports. It can also be a helpful aid in providing health and safety information — if you know where to look. Several sites have built a solid reputation for explaining health conditions and medicines, as well as providing ag health and safety tips.

While these web sites should not be used to substitute a visit to the doctor, they can be a great supplement to expanding your health and safety knowledge. Here's a roundup of what the web has to offer.

## Around the farm

With agriculture consistently ranking as one of the most hazardous occupations, there's a need for knowledge about ag safety. The National Ag Safety Database (NASD) at [www.cdc.gov/nasd](http://www.cdc.gov/nasd) provides a vast online directory of ag safety information by topic — from fire safety and skin cancer to machinery safety and manure pits. The site also offers several online safety videos.

Agriwellness Inc. at [www.agriwellness.org](http://www.agriwellness.org) is devoted to counseling and mental health services for rural communities. Its site includes a “Helplines” button, which

provides links to rural counseling hotlines in the Midwestern states.

At [www.atvsafety.org](http://www.atvsafety.org), the ATV Safety Institute provides some golden rules for ATV riders to be safe and respect the outdoors. Likewise, the 4-H ATV site at [www.atv-youth.org](http://www.atv-youth.org) provides more information for safe ATV practices.

Farm Safety 4 Just Kids at [www.fs4jk.org](http://www.fs4jk.org) was founded to promote a safe farm environment to prevent health hazards, injuries and fatalities to children and youth. The site offers various resources and programs to help teach farm safety fundamentals. For example, fact sheets on everything from electrical safety to sun safety are available on the web site, as are a “how-to” manual for planning a farm safety day camp; a checklist for keeping your farm a safe zone when children are around; and a PowerPoint presentation about buckling up and rural roadway safety.

## General health

If it's general health information you seek, the well-known [webmd.com](http://webmd.com) site is easy to navigate, offering categories for women, men and children, as well as an alphabetized list

of health concerns for which you may be seeking information — from Alzheimer's to sleep disorders. The interactive web site even offers a “symptom checker” to help diagnose health concerns.


Likewise, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) at [www.nih.gov](http://www.nih.gov) offers information in an A-to-Z listing of health topics, providing the signs and symptoms, evidence-based treatments and means of prevention. The site also provides links to research trials and more than 27,000 clinical studies sponsored by the NIH. MedlinePlus is one of the most popular features on the site, as it offers an online medical encyclopedia as well as information about prescriptions and over-the-counter medications.

[Mayoclinic.com](http://Mayoclinic.com) provides an easy-to-use search to look up a medical condition or symptom. It also offers a First-Aid Guide, which can be a quick reference for handling bruises, fainting or nosebleeds, or more serious medical emergencies such as choking, animal bites or electrical shock until professional help arrives.

“Ask A Specialist” is another popular feature on the site. This is where questions are answered by Mayo Clinic specialists. Treatment Decisions is also a helpful tool offered on the site. It walks web users through the pros and cons of different treatment options for everything from cancer to migraines to help evaluate the treatment approach that is best for each individual.

For information about specific prescription drugs, [www.rxlist.com](http://www.rxlist.com) and [www.drugs.com](http://www.drugs.com) are two of the most utilized sites on the web.

## Just for kids

The Kids Health web site at <http://kidshhealth.org/kid> is a great resource for kids; it includes short articles on healthy eating, how the body works and even dealing with feelings. Under the “Watch Out” button, there's a list of safety articles, including a piece on how to be safe on the farm. There's also a “Game Closet” on the site with ideas for games and experiments relating to health and nutrition. It's a great site for fun at home, learning, or school and 4-H activities. 

## National Council working for safer, healthier ag industry

In an average year, 516 workers die while doing farm work, and each day about 243 workers suffer lost-time injuries, making agriculture one of the most hazardous occupations.

To help close that safety gap, the Agricultural Safety and Health Council of America (ASHCA) has recently been formed to reduce disease, injuries and fatalities in American agriculture.

Driven by farmer/rancher and agribusiness leaders, ASHCA is the first council of its kind in the U.S. to pursue a national strategy for safety in American agriculture. It is based on the success of similar national initiatives in Australia and Canada.

Goals for the Council include:

- ▶ Pursuing national strategies to reduce agricultural injuries and fatalities, based on reliable data and emerging issues.
- ▶ Influencing research priorities to rapidly identify best management practices for worker safety and health that maximize cost efficiency and sustainability.
- ▶ Guiding the development of effective delivery systems for safety and health through communications involving leaders representing producers, agribusiness, insurance, safety associations and others.

Organizations active in ASHCA include Agco, Agri-Services Agency, American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF), Association of Equipment Manufacturers, CropLife Foundation, Farm Employers Labor Service, John Deere, National Pork Board, New Holland and Workers Compensation Fund-Utah. Administrative services are provided by the National Farm Medicine Center at Marshfield Clinic Research Foundation.

For more information, visit [www.ashca.org](http://www.ashca.org) or call 715-221-7270.