

The Health Information Journey

The rapid rise and evolution of social media, combined with the decline of trust in institutions and the tenor of our national dialogue, has opened the door for a flood of misinformation to reach a public primed to receive it.

Healthcare provider organizations working to keep the public informed and healthy need to understand:

How and where people get health information

Who may be more susceptible to misinformation

How the public perceives and uses health technology

From there, providers can determine where best to show up for their patients and consumers as they seek, evaluate and use health information.

While the who, what and how will vary for each organization, the universal imperative is to be an active and persistent voice as people are both passively exposed to and actively search for insights related to their health.

Cognitive Dissonance?

Concern about misinformation isn't affecting online behavior. People are worried about misinformation and aware that algorithms give them more of what they already like. Yet, they still use tools that open the door for misinformation and selection bias.

Within that context, here is a four-stage framework for how consumers interact with and use health information. Think of it as a journey:

Catalyst: What spurs someone to think about their health and pursue further information?

First action: Where does one go first to begin exploring?

Investigation: After the door is open, where does one go to dive deeper?

Use: Once they have the information, what do they do with it?

Of course, this journey is not linear. There are on- and off-ramps throughout the process and opportunities to loop back to previous stages or to restart entirely. Different people will travel it in different ways. But by viewing it as a four-step process, healthcare providers can more easily answer the question of, "Where do we need to show up for the people who matter to us...and how do we do it?"

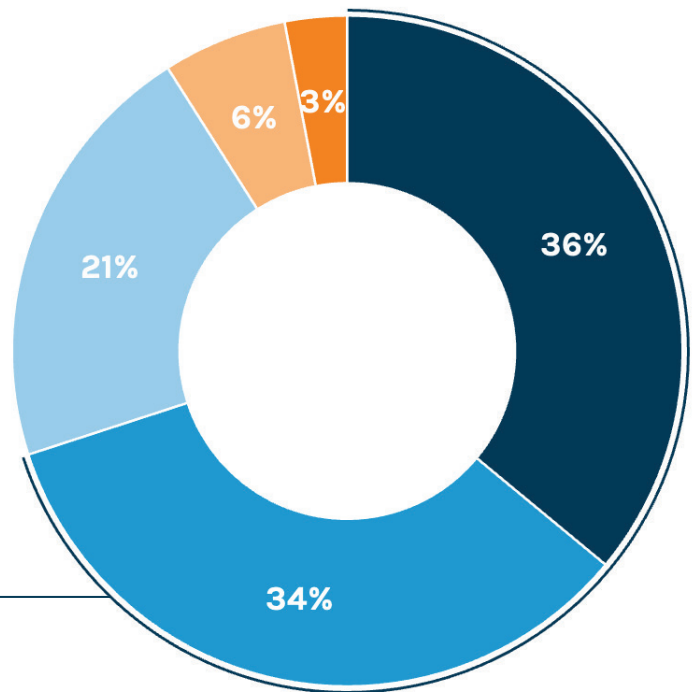


CONTEXT

Worry about misinformation is widespread: Seven in 10 are concerned about health misinformation

How concerned are you with the possibility of misinformation being presented online about health-related issues?

- Very concerned
- Somewhat concerned
- A little concerned
- Not at all concerned
- Unsure



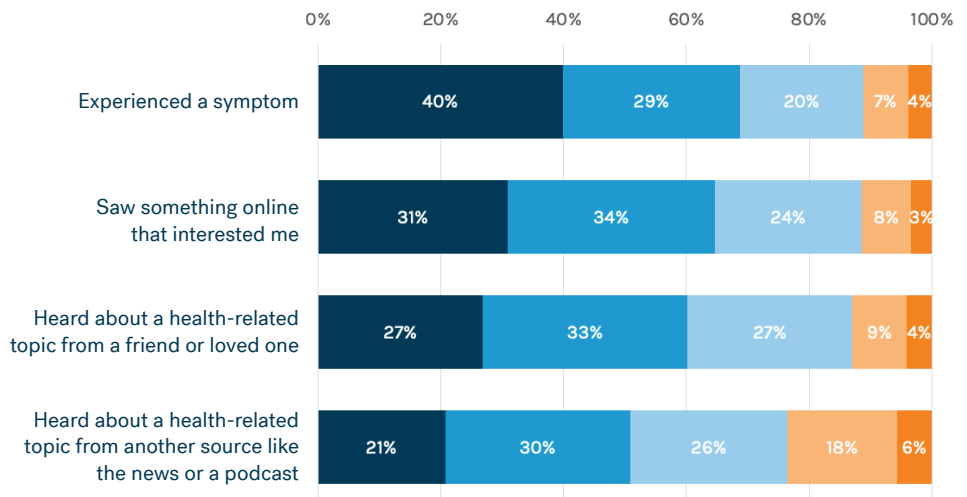
70%
Total concerned

CATALYST

...And yet, half or more search for health information even when not experiencing symptoms

How likely are you to search for health information online in the following situations?

- Extremely likely
- Moderately likely
- Somewhat likely
- Not at all likely
- Unsure



FIRST ACTION

Search/AI leads all sources as a first step when actively looking for health information

Today, AI tools are so closely integrated into Google with click-less search that the lines between these options are blurred.

Where do you typically go first when starting to look for health-related information?

41%

Search/AI

21%

My PCP or specialist

14%

Social/YouTube

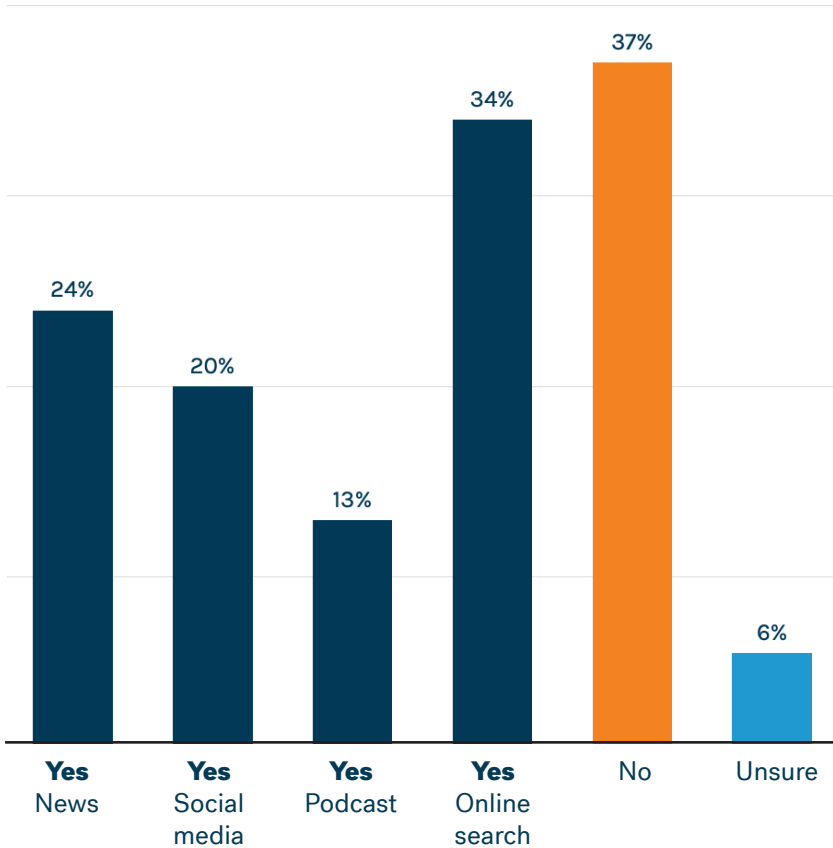
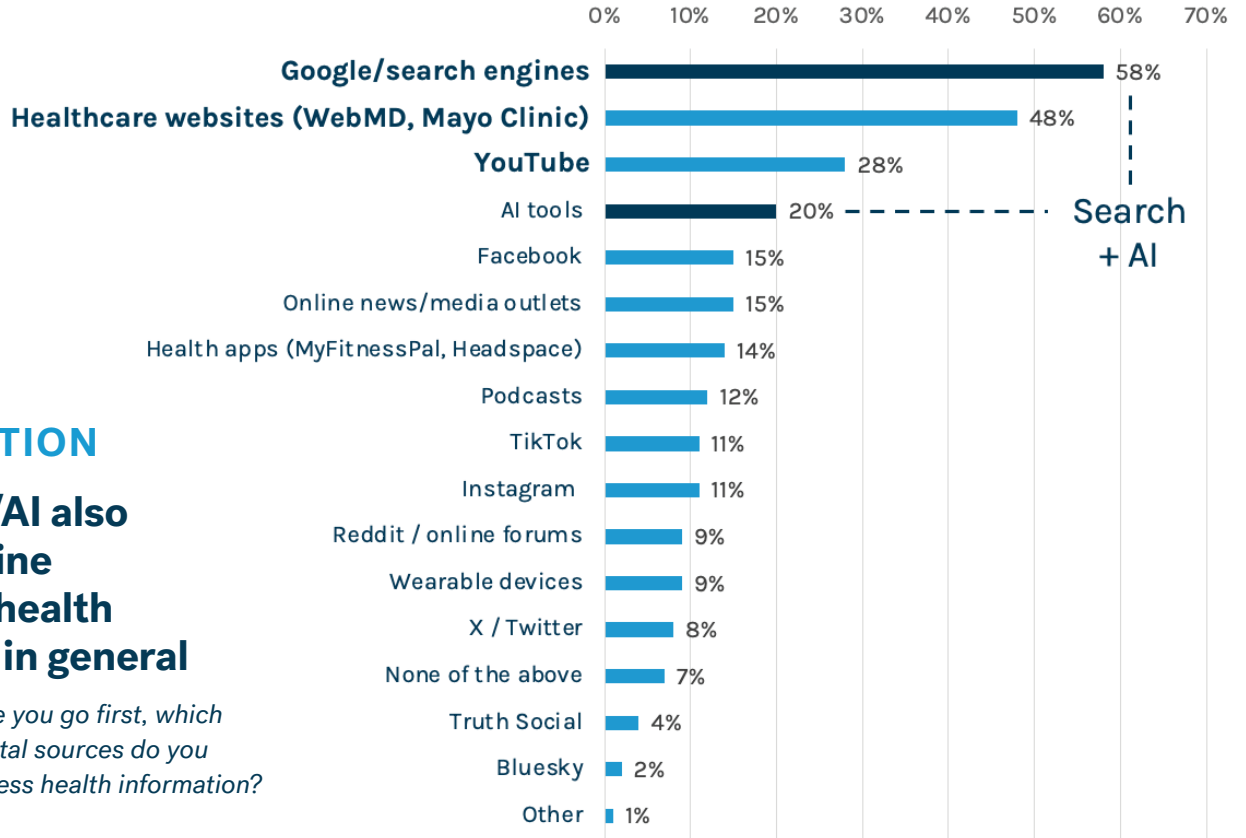
13%

Healthcare/hospital websites

INVESTIGATION

And search/AI also leads all online sources for health information in general

Regardless of where you go first, which of the following digital sources do you regularly use to access health information? (Select all that apply.)



USE

More than half have used information found online in conversation with a provider

Have you used information you've gotten online or from a podcast when speaking with a healthcare provider?

57%

Total have used information

Misinformation is not going away.

The imperative is to understand the environment so healthcare organizations can effectively use their trusted voices to connect with individuals in their ongoing and near constant journey – hearing, processing, looking for and making decisions via the flood of health information available. At a high level, our data points to key touchpoints, while the specifics can be tailored for each audience and persona.



CATALYST

Experience Symptom
See/Hear Health Info



FIRST ACTION

Look Online
Listen to News/Podcasts
Hear Family/Friends



INVESTIGATION

Review Social
Use Search/AI



USE

Make Health Decision
Tell Others
Interact with Provider

Imperatives for Digital Engagement



Build emotionally compelling content that is data-driven.



Take full advantage of the public's trust in doctors and nurses – including on social media – and empower these key messengers.



Don't ignore the rise of the micro-influencer. A trusted voice doesn't need millions of followers to make a significant local impact.



Constantly evaluate how your organization shows up online, which today includes not just SEO but also GEO (Generative Engine Optimization) for AI.



Revisit key audience personas to ensure you're targeting moments and channels that resonate.



Grow your local or targeted audience by focusing on issues that are most important to your patients and consumers.

We can help.

Ready to review your online communication strategy, evaluate your audience and consider how your organization can best show up?

Get in touch to schedule a walk-through of the full survey results.

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