



# Editing Health articles on Wikipedia

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**An encyclopedia**

**Neutral point of view**

**Free content that anyone can  
use, edit and distribute**

**Respect and civility**

**No firm rules**



# WikiProject Medicine

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- Health articles on Wikipedia have to meet a higher standard of proof.
- Health articles on Wikipedia are collectively read >10 million times a day
- 2.3 billion views in 2017

# Who reads Wikipedia?

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211,552 health articles in 283 languages,  
read by:

- Members of the public accessing information to make health decisions
- 90% of medical students
- 50-70% of physicians
- Rural health centres
- Educators, policy makers, journalists

# Why are there stricter rules for WikiProject Medicine (WP:MEDRS)?

“Poor information about on medical topics can have real-world consequences for readers who don't always bring the amount of skepticism they should to Wikipedia's health information.”

# When does WP:MEDRS apply?

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- Applies to any biomedical content on Wikipedia
- Applies to any content you edit in relation to the medical or mental health of human beings on Wikipedia, regardless of whether the overall topic of the article is a health topic.
- Applies to any content related to medicine, diseases, conditions, or diagnoses
- Applies to any content related to human health, even within non-medical articles.
- Applies to any content about human biochemistry or about medical research in animals (if the research relates to human health)

# Does it pass the WP:MEDRS test?

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Before you start editing, ask the question:

Is there any possibility that someone could use the content you're adding to draw conclusions about their own physical or mental health?

If the answer is YES or even MAYBE, use WP:MEDRS.

# When does WP:MEDRS not apply?

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There will be some exceptions when WP:MEDRS rules do not apply:

- A sentence in the "culture" section of the "Black Death" article describing its impact on 14th-century religious fervor in Europe.
- A "history" section within the "Opium" article, describing its use in ancient times.
- A "popular culture" section mentioning that the fictional protagonist of the spy-thriller series Homeland was diagnosed with bipolar disorder.

Examples sourced from Outreach Dashboard Training Library - [Editing Medical Topics](#)



# WP:MEDRS Rule number one

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## NO Primary Sources allowed

This includes:

- Any publication that focuses on a single research study
- Any sources where the author directly took part in the research (ie. examined patients, injected test subjects, interacted with the medication, supervised the research, etc...)
- This rule applies regardless of the reputation of the researcher or the author

# Why no primary sources?

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The “No original research” rule:

Wikipedia is a tertiary source and therefore only publishes information that has undergone peer review in secondary sources and in the case of medical topics where a medical consensus has been achieved.

In the context of WikiProject Medicine, suitable secondary sources would be articles that summarize multiple findings from a variety of researchers, and report back on findings across the field.

# WP:MEDRS - Sources to avoid

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- Any research papers published in medical journals (except for systematic reviews or literature reviews that examine a wide variety of studies)
- Popular press articles, regardless of the reputation of the newspaper or media source
- Any blogs, regardless of who the authors might be

# WP:MEDRS - Recommended sources

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- Generally published no more than 5 years ago
- Provide a summary of secondary sources or multiple primary sources
- Give an overview of the medical community's current understanding of the topic
- Combine the results of multiple studies
- The publication is independent of the research

# Examples of good sources

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- literature reviews or systematic reviews found in reputable medical journals
- academic and professional books written by experts in the relevant field, from a respected publisher
- medical guidelines or position statements from nationally or internationally recognized expert bodies

# Other common issues to bear in mind

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- Always refer to the Wikipedia:Manual of Style/Medicine-related articles before expanding an article or creating new headings
- Be aware of how you present information in the content that you're editing and always avoid presenting two unrelated sources in a way that might lead to a conclusion that isn't made explicit by those sources. I.e. If one source says A, and another says B, you should not be tempted to connect A and B in your article.
- All the content you add to Wikipedia must be paraphrased in your own words. Paraphrasing medical information must ensure that the original information is not distorted and all the content is accurate without citing the original text too closely.

# Continuing editing as part of the WikiProject Medicine community

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- Be open to feedback and corrections from more experienced editors
- Be prepared to engage on article talk pages
- Flag up any issues that you've noticed on an article on the talk page and be prepared to work with other editors to reach consensus
- Reach out to WikiProject Medecine editors for advice before moving new content from Draft space into Main Space on Wikipedia or from your sandbox into an existing article.