



SCHNECK

Better Healthcare Begins Here

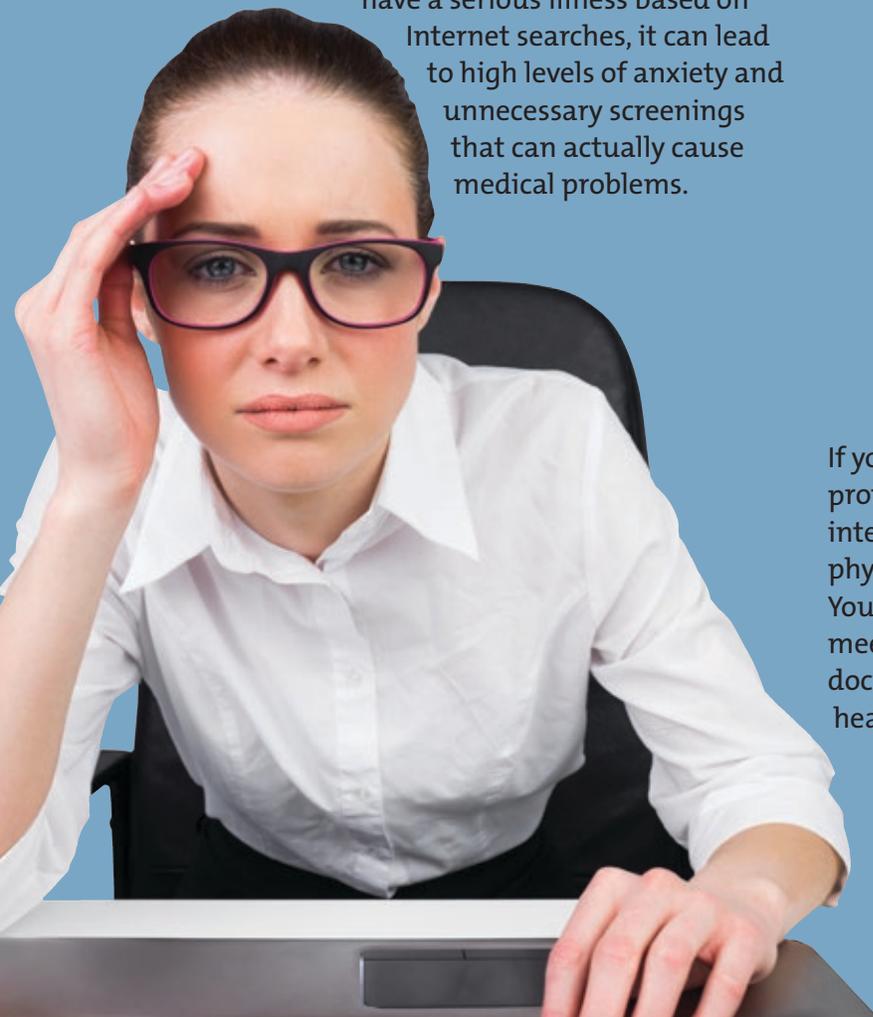
Do you scramble to the Internet every time you get the sniffles or feel a twinge? What you really may have is a bad case of “searchachondria.” Eighty percent of Internet users utilize the Web to answer health questions and self-diagnose when they don’t feel well.



| Searchachondria

The Internet is an incredibly rich source of information, so this may sound like a good idea; however, studies show that using the Internet to self-diagnose is leading to an entirely new problem called “cyberchondria,” which is anxiety for one’s personal wellness caused by health-related online searches. Letting your searchachondria stress you out enough to give you cyberchondria can actually turn your well-meaning search into a health hazard. Here are just a few reasons why trying to answer health questions and diagnose any problems without the aid of a doctor can be problematic:

- There is so much information available online that it can be difficult to sort reliable sources from those that are less reputable. Even when health-related information is reliable, most searchers do not have a medical background to allow them to know what to do with it, as medical problems tend to be complex.
- Recent studies have shown that as many as 9 out of 10 people who used the Internet to self-diagnose were led to information on serious illnesses when they had basic symptoms.
- When patients mistakenly believe that they have a serious illness based on Internet searches, it can lead to high levels of anxiety and unnecessary screenings that can actually cause medical problems.



So don’t stress yourself! Make an appointment to talk with your doctor about what is bothering you. If you can’t stay away from the Internet in the meantime, use credible medical websites to search for signs and symptoms — NOT a diagnosis — so that you will have a comprehensive list to take to your doctor. The most important search you can make is finding the right doctor if you don’t already have one. Your Spirit of Women hospital has a physician directory that can help you find a doctor who fits your needs. Here are some tips and questions to keep in mind during your search:

- Think about what kind of doctor you need. Start with your primary healthcare provider, who can help you with your overall wellness and can make a recommendation if you need to see a specialist.
- Start with any recommendations from friends, family, and co-workers. Keep in mind that your needs may be different from the person giving you a recommendation, so your decision should be based on whether a physician will fit you and your situation.
- Does your insurance plan cover this physician? If so, what services does your plan cover? Will the office process the insurance claims for you?
- Where is the doctor’s office located? Is it close to your home or work, and can you access it easily through public transportation? Are the hours convenient for you?
- Can routine screenings and labs be done at the office, or will you need to go to another lab to have them done?
- How long do you need to wait for an appointment after scheduling? Can you be seen on the same day if you have an urgent problem?

If you are unsure about whether or not a healthcare professional is the right fit for you, ask to make an interview appointment where you can talk to the physician about your health and wellness concerns. You may be charged a fee for the appointment, but meeting face-to-face can help you determine if a doctor is someone you feel comfortable with for your healthcare needs.