

# **Health Information Online**

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**Eight in ten internet users have looked for health information online, with increased interest in diet, fitness, drugs, health insurance, experimental treatments, and particular doctors and hospitals**

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# Summary of Findings

## Online health searches expand in areas like diet, fitness, and drug information.

When it comes to online health searches, specific diseases and treatments continue to be the most popular topics. But the greatest growth is in seeking information about doctors and hospitals, experimental treatments, health insurance, medicines, fitness, and nutrition.

Health Topics Searched Online		
The typical health seeker has searched for 5 topics. About a third of health seekers have searched for 7 or more topics. Significant differences are marked with bold/blue type.		
Health Topic	Internet Users Who Have Searched for Info on It (%)	
	2002	2004
Specific disease or medical problem	63%	66%
Certain medical treatment or procedure	47	51
<b>Diet, nutrition, vitamins, or nutritional supplements</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>Exercise or fitness</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Prescription or over-the-counter drugs</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Health insurance</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>31</b>
Alternative treatments or medicines	28	30
<b>A particular doctor or hospital</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>28</b>
Depression, anxiety, stress, or mental health issues	21	23
<b>Experimental treatments or medicines</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>23</b>
Environmental health hazards	17	18
Immunizations or vaccinations	13	16
Sexual health information	10	11
Medicare or Medicaid	9	11
Problems with drugs or alcohol	8	8
How to quit smoking	6	7

Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project December 2002 Survey (N=1,220); November 2004 Survey (N=537). Margin of error for comparing the two samples is +/- 4.6%. Statistically significant differences are in bold type.

This Pew Internet & American Life Project report is based on the findings of a daily tracking survey on Americans' use of the internet. All numerical data was gathered through telephone interviews conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates between November 23-30, 2004, among a sample of 914 adults, aged 18 and older. For results based on the total sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling and other random effects is +/- 3%. For results based Internet users (n=537), the margin of sampling error is +/- 4%.

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**Eight in ten internet users have looked online for health information.**

Seventy-nine percent of internet users have searched online for information on at least one major health topic, statistically the same portion (80%) as the Pew Internet & American Life Project found in 2002. That translates to about 95 million American adults (18+) who use the internet to find health information.

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**Speed of access and years of online experience are among the key trends that may influence online health searching.**

There are many reasons why internet users might now be more likely to search for certain types of health information. Many health-related Web sites are supplying more content and that might be driving users toward certain topics. Government agencies' call for obesity awareness and public education about nutrition may be increasing public awareness and prompting more traffic. The pharmaceutical industry's marketing campaigns may be paying off in increased interest in their products. More Americans may be looking for good deals on health insurance or checking up on their hospital's quality ratings online. The interest in experimental treatments may be growing as internet users become aware of the possibilities available to them.

As in 2002, certain groups of internet users are the most likely to have sought health information online: women, internet users younger than 65, college graduates, those with more online experience, and those with broadband access.

Two ongoing trends in the internet population may reinforce some users' greater tendency to seek out certain health information online. There are now many more internet users with high-speed or broadband access at home. Those who have high-speed connections are, in many cases, more likely than those with dial-up connections to have sought various kinds of health information online. Additionally, there are many more internet users with six or more years of online experience. These "power users" may now turn to the internet not only when they have a pressing concern, but when they have an every-day sort of health questions about diet, fitness, or how to check if something is covered by their health insurance.

<b>Health Information Online: Summary of Findings at a Glance</b>
Health searches expand in areas like diet, fitness, and drug information.
Eight in ten internet users have looked online for health information.
Speed of access and years of online experience are among the key trends that may influence online health searching.
Source: Fox, Susannah. <i>Health Information Online</i> . Washington, DC: Pew Internet & American Life Project, May 17, 2005.

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# Acknowledgements

About the Pew Internet & American Life Project: The Pew Internet Project is a nonprofit initiative of the Pew Research Center and is funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts to examine the social impact of the internet. The project is non-partisan and does not advocate policy outcomes. The project's Web site: [www.pewinternet.org](http://www.pewinternet.org)

About Princeton Survey Research Associates: PSRA conducted the survey that is covered in this report. It is an independent research company specializing in social and policy work. The firm designs, conducts, and analyzes surveys worldwide. Its expertise also includes qualitative research and content analysis. With offices in Princeton, New Jersey, and Washington, D.C., PSRA serves the needs of clients around the nation and the world. The firm can be reached at 911 Commons Way, Princeton, NJ 08540, by telephone at 609-924-9204, by fax at 609-924-7499, or by email at [ResearchNJ@PSRA.com](mailto:ResearchNJ@PSRA.com)

# Part 1.

## Health Seekers

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### **Eight in ten internet users have looked online for health information.**

Eight out of ten (79%) American internet users have searched for information on at least one major health topic online, statistically the same portion (80%) as in 2002. That translates to about 95 million American adults (18+ years) who use the internet to find health information (a small increase from 2002 because the internet population has grown a bit). As in 2002, certain groups of internet users are the most likely to have sought health information online: women, internet users younger than 65, college graduates, those with more online experience, and those with broadband access.

<b>Health Seekers</b>	
<b>Demographic Group</b>	<b>Percent Who Have Searched for Health Info</b>
Online women	82%
Online men	75
Internet users age 18-29	77
Internet users age 30-49	81
Internet users age 50-64	82
Internet users age 65+ (n=51)	66
Internet users with a high school diploma	67
Internet users with some college education	80
Internet users with a college degree	86
Internet users with 2-3 years of online experience (n=66)	66
Internet users with 6+ years of online experience	86
Internet users with a dial-up connection at home	72
Internet users with a broadband connection at home	87

Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project November 2004 Survey (N=537). Margin of error for the entire sample of internet users is +/- 4%. Margins of error for comparison of subgroups are higher.

The general make-up of the internet population has also not changed dramatically in the last two years. In December 2002, 57% of American adults said they had internet access. At the time of this survey, November 2004, 59% of American adults said they had internet access. There are no statistically significant differences between 2002 and 2004 when it comes to the population of online health seekers by gender, race, ethnicity, age, or education.

## Part 1. Health Seekers

<b>Contours of the Health Seeker Population</b>			
The health seeker population is characterized by a comparatively greater portion of people with college educations and internet users with at least six years of online experience. For example, the "Health Seekers" column should read as "39% of health seekers have at least a college education and 60% have six or more years of online experience."			
<b>Demographic Group</b>	<b>Health Seekers</b>	<b>Internet Population</b>	<b>U.S. Population</b>
Women	54%	52%	51%
Men	46	48	49%
Age 18-29	24	24	21
Age 30-49	45	43	36
Age 50-64	25	23	23
Age 65+	6	7	16
Less than a high school education	5	6	14
High school diploma	22	25	33
Some college education	31	30	23
College degree or more	39	36	25
Less than 2 years of online experience	4	6	4
2-3 years of online experience	10	13	8
4-5 years of online experience	24	23	14
6+ years of online experience	60	55	32
Dial-up connection at home	44	48	28
Broadband connection at home	53	49	29

Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project November 2004 Survey (N=914). Margin of error for the entire sample is +/- 3%.; for internet users it is +/- 4%. Margins of error for comparison of subgroups are higher.

## Part 2.

### Health Topics

The Pew Internet & American Life Project's previous research has suggested that online health seekers were often motivated to search out information that relates to actions they might need to take for specific medical issues in their lives.<sup>1</sup> For instance, they (or people they love) might have experienced health symptoms that worry them and internet users search for information about whether they would be wise to visit a doctor. Or, they might have just received a diagnosis and wanted to learn more about their medical condition. Or a medical treatment or new medicine might have been prescribed and they wanted to learn more about those things.

In many cases, online health seekers were action-oriented and highly purposeful because there was a pressing medical issue for them to address.

In this survey we still see those concerns reflected in many respondents' answers. At the same time, there are also notable changes that relate to specific kinds of health searches. Online investigations for information about diet, fitness, exercise and over-the-counter drugs have grown. This suggests that online health seekers are increasingly interested in wellness information and material that could be unconnected to worrisome symptoms, a doctor's diagnosis, or another kind of health crisis.

Two other notable categories of growth were in searches related to health insurance and material about specific doctors and hospitals. This also suggests that health seekers are doing more "health homework" online before they make big decisions about health care.

What follows is an analysis of the topics we probed in our survey. A large table on page 13 shows some of the key demographic realities for each of these online health searches.

#### **Specific disease**

Two-thirds (66%) of internet users have searched for information about a specific disease or medical problem, a slight but not statistically significant increase from 63% who did so in 2002. As in 2002, internet users who are women, between 30-64 years old, college educated, and have six or more years of online experience are more likely to have searched online for this type of information.

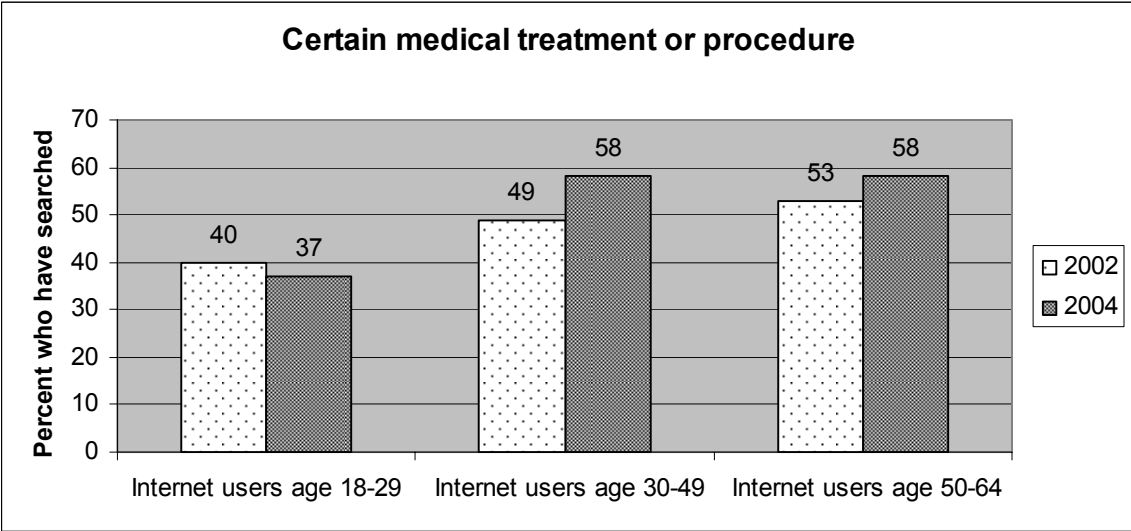
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<sup>1</sup> Fox, Susannah and Deborah Fallows, "Internet Health Resources: Health searches and email have become more commonplace, but there is room for improvement in searches and overall Internet access." (Pew Internet & American Life Project: July 16, 2003. Available at: [http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/95/report\\_display.asp](http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/95/report_display.asp))



**Medical procedures and treatments**

Just over half (51%) of internet users have searched online for information about a certain medical treatment or procedure, a slight but not statistically significant increase from 47% who did so in 2002. As in 2002, internet users who are women, between 30-64 years old, college educated, have six or more years of online experience, and have broadband access at home are more likely to have searched online for this type of information. One group reported a statistically significant increase of interest in medical treatment information – 58% of internet users between 30-49 years old said they have done this type of search, compared to 49% who did so in 2002.

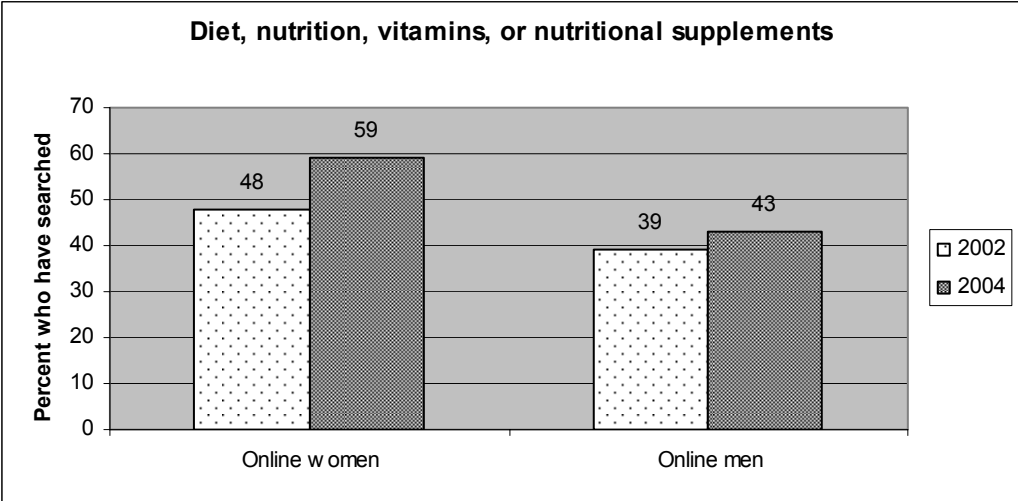


**Diet and nutrition**

A significantly higher percentage of internet users went online to research diet and nutrition over the last two years. In 2004, 51% of internet users report having done that type of search, compared to 44% of internet users in 2002.

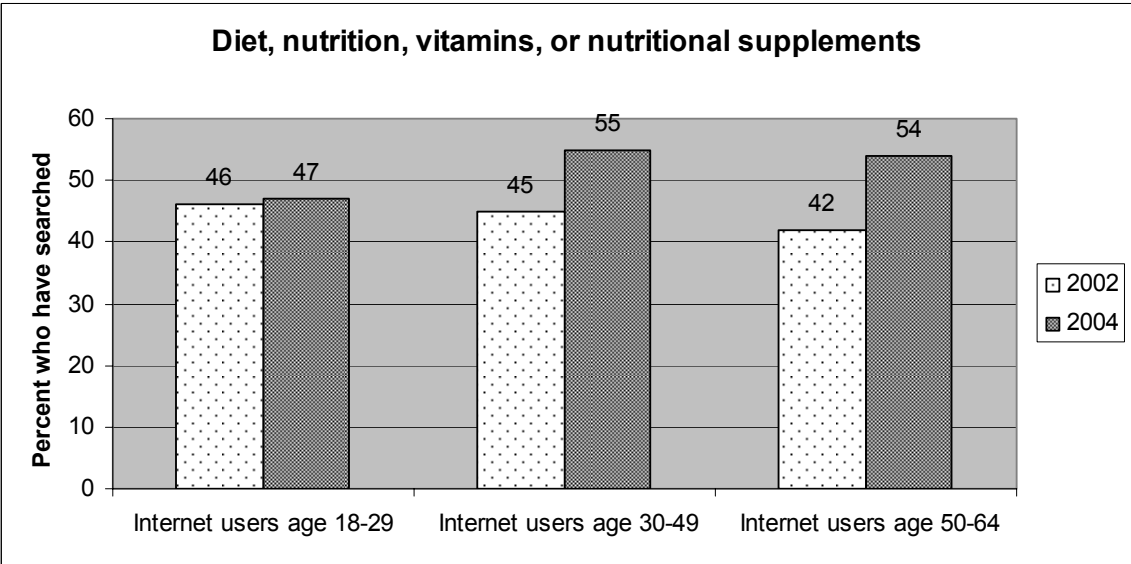
As in 2002, internet users who are women, younger than 65 years old, college educated, have six or more years of online experience, and have broadband access at home are more likely to have searched for this type of information. However, women and those between 30-64 years old reported increases that are statistically significant.

**Part 2. Health Topics**



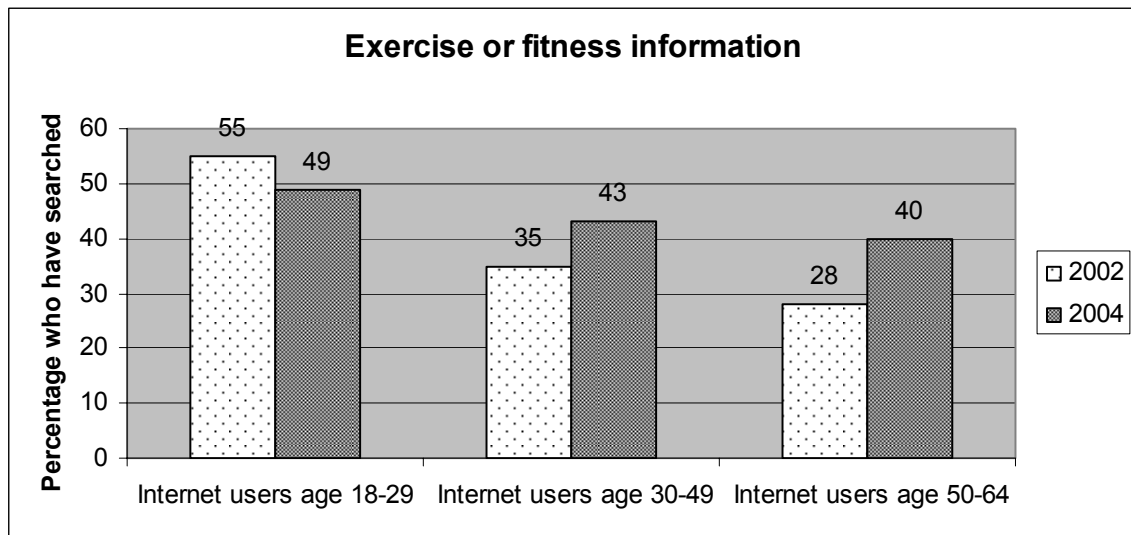
In 2004, 59% of online women said they have searched for diet information, a significant increase from 48% who did so in 2002. In 2004, 43% of men said they had done a diet-related search, a negligible increase from 39% in 2002.

Internet users between 18 and 29 years old reported essentially the same interest in 2004 as they did in 2002 – 47% said they had looked online for diet and nutrition information in our most recent survey. By contrast, 55% of internet users 30-49 years old and 54% of internet users 50-64 years old said they had done this type of information search, a significant increase for each group. The 2004 sample did not include enough internet users age 65 and older to report the precise figure, but “wired seniors” are significantly less likely than younger users to have searched for diet and nutrition information online.



**Fitness**

A significantly higher percentage of internet users are going online to find information about exercise and fitness than did so two years ago. Forty-two percent of internet users report having done that type of search, compared to 36% of internet users in 2002. Exercise and fitness information is equally popular with men and women, as it was in 2002. As in 2002, internet users younger than 65 are more likely to have done this type of search, but one age group showed significantly more interest as of 2004: those 50-64 years old.



In 2004, 40% of internet users between 50 and 64 years old reported that they have looked online for information about exercise or fitness, compared to 28% of internet users in that age group in 2002. The changes reported by the other age groups are not statistically significant. In 2004, 49% of internet users 18-29 years old and 43% of internet users 30-49 years old reported this type of search. Wired seniors (age 65+) are significantly less likely than younger users to have searched for exercise tips online.

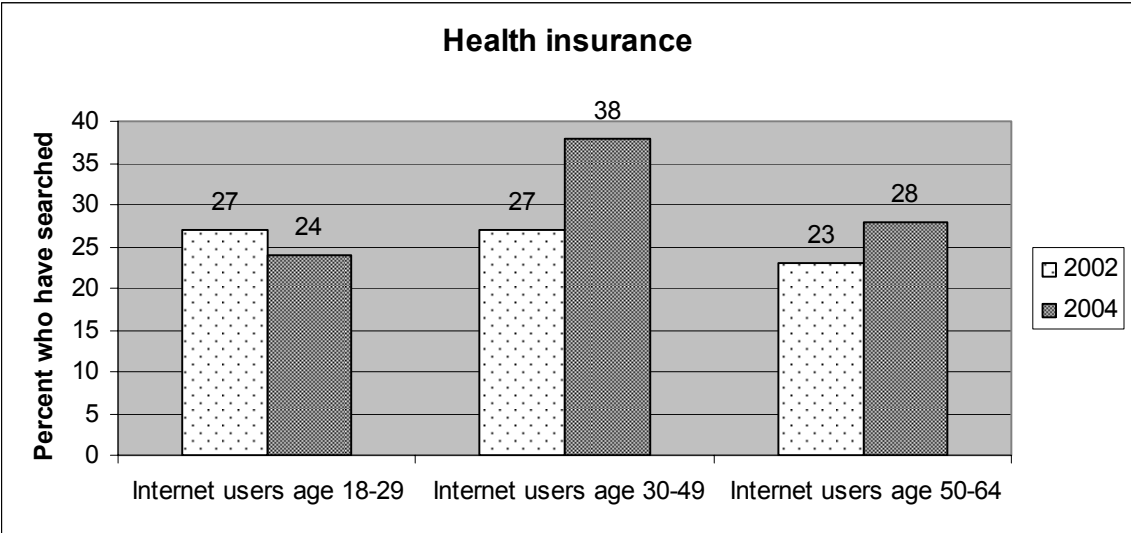
**Prescription and over-the-counter drugs**

In 2004, 40% of internet users reported going online to find information about prescription or over-the-counter drugs, compared to 34% of internet users in 2002. This is a statistically significant increase that was reported by all kinds of internet users – no one demographic group stood out as exceptional.

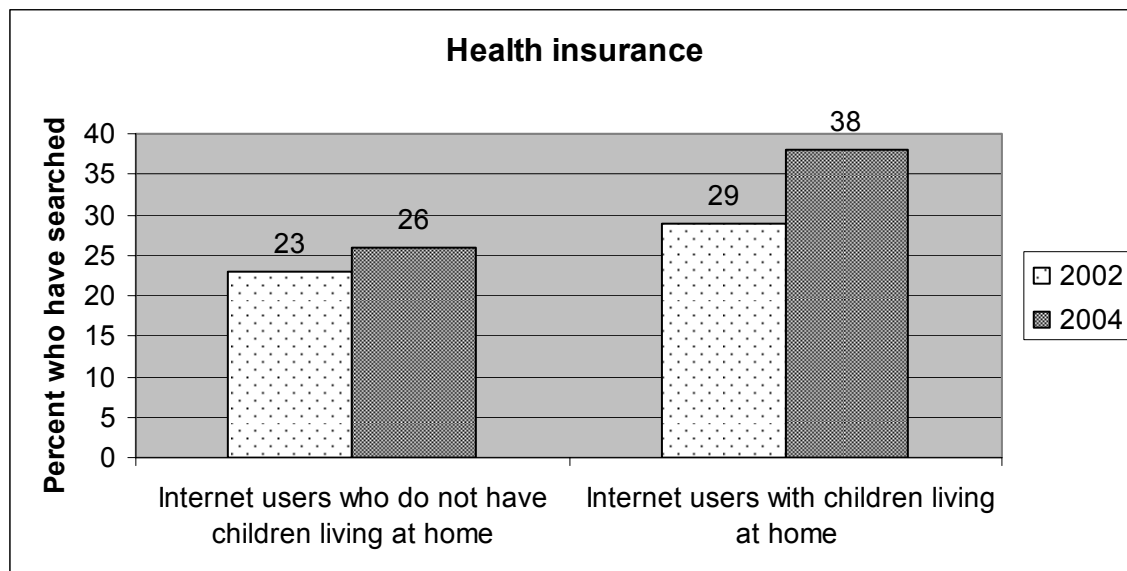
Internet users between 50 and 64 years old continue to lead other age groups when it comes to this type of search – 46% have done this, compared to 32% of 18-29 year-old internet users, for example. Similarly, internet users with six or more years of online experience lead the way – 46% of the most veteran users reported in 2004 that they have searched for drug information, compared to 22% of internet users with two or three years of online experience.

Health insurance

Interest in health insurance information on the internet increased significantly between 2002 and 2004. Thirty-one percent of internet users said they have searched for health insurance information, compared to 25% of internet users in 2002 who reported doing that type of search.



Women and men are now equal when it comes to this type of search – 31% of online women and 30% of online men say they have looked online for health insurance information. In 2002, women were significantly more likely to have done this activity (29% vs. 22%). As in 2002, internet users with a college degree, those who are online parents, and internet users with six or more years of online experience are more likely than their counterparts to report interest in health insurance information online. Health insurance information continues to draw users in those demographic categories, but another group joined in to drive up the total percentage compared to two years ago: internet users between 30 and 49 years old. Fully 38% of internet users in their 30s and 40s have done this type of search, up from 27% in 2002. Forty percent of internet users with college degrees have looked for health insurance information, up from 31% in 2002. Thirty-eight percent of internet users with children younger than 18 living at home have done so, up from 29% in 2002. Forty percent of the most veteran internet users have done this type of search, up from 29% in 2002.



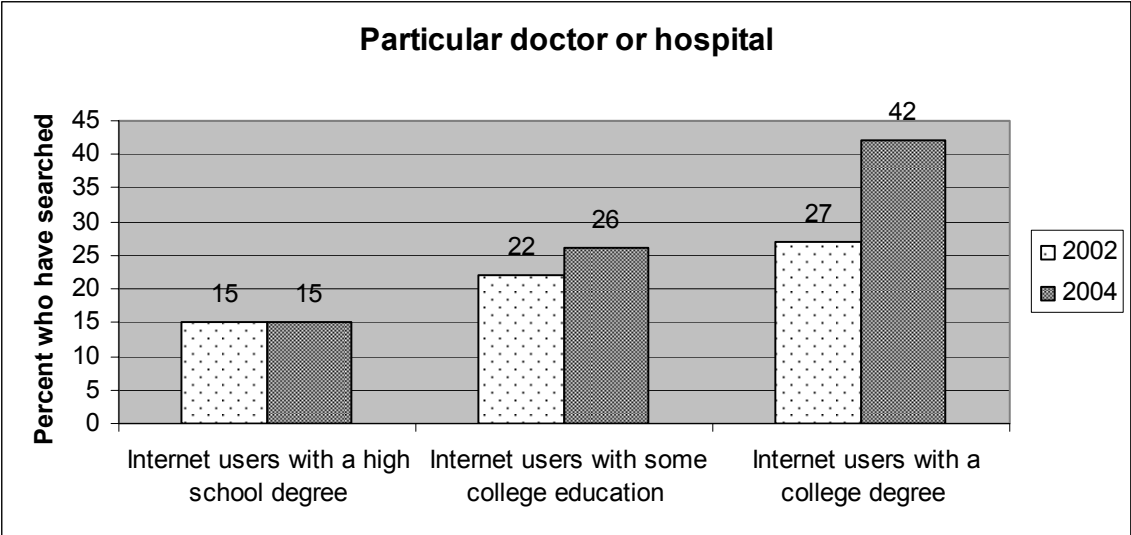
### Alternative medicine

Thirty percent of internet users have looked online for information about alternative treatments or medicines. That is statistically the same percentage as in 2002, when 28% of internet users reported that kind of search. Online men are now just as likely as online women to have done this type of research, whereas in 2002, women reported higher interest in alternative treatment information online. As in 2002, internet users between 30 and 64 years old are the most likely to have done such a search. Thirty-nine percent of users age 50-64 and 33% of users age 30-49 years old have searched for alternative medicines, compared to 21% of 18-29 year-old internet users and a similarly low percentage of internet users age 65 and older.

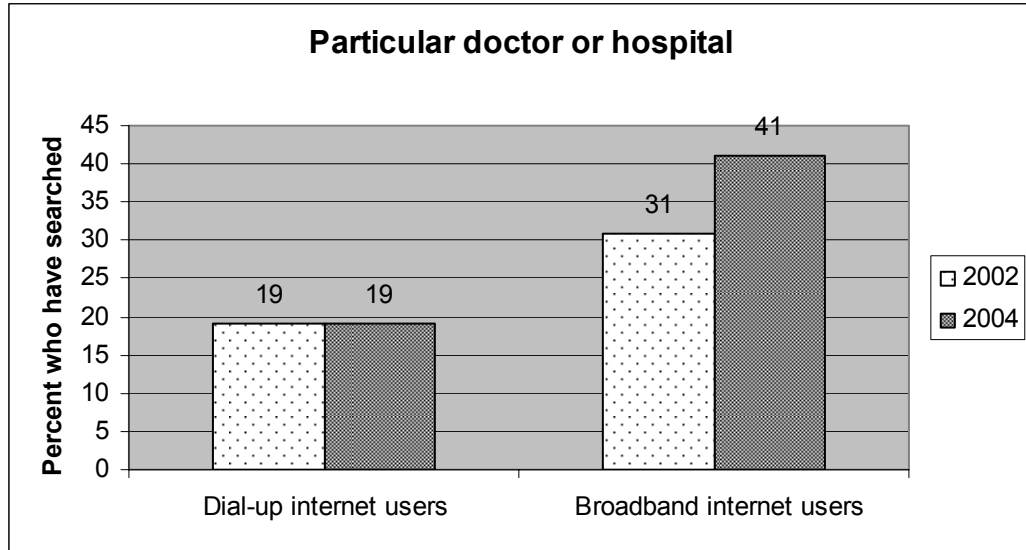
### Particular doctor or hospital

Next to diet and nutrition information, looking for information about a particular doctor or hospital saw the greatest increase in popularity as a health topic between 2002 and 2004. Twenty-eight percent of internet users say they have done this type of search, up from 21% who did so in 2002.

Part 2. Health Topics



Internet users with a college degree reported the most significant jump – 42% of these highly-educated users now say they have looked for information about a particular doctor or hospital, compared to 27% of the same group in 2002. By comparison, 15% of internet users with a high school diploma report having done this type of search. Similarly, the most veteran users, with six or more years of online experience, reported a significant jump in this type of search and set themselves apart from their less-experienced counterparts. Thirty-seven percent of internet users who have been online for six or more years have searched for information about a doctor or hospital, up from 26% in 2002. By comparison, just 10% of internet users with two or three years of online experience have done this type of search. Internet users with a fast, broadband connection at home also reported a significant increase in this type of search. Forty-one percent of home broadband users have looked online for information about a particular doctor or hospital, up from 31% of all broadband users in 2002. By comparison, 19% of dial-up users reported this type of search in our 2004 survey. All other demographic groups were essentially equal when it comes to looking information about a certain doctor or hospital.

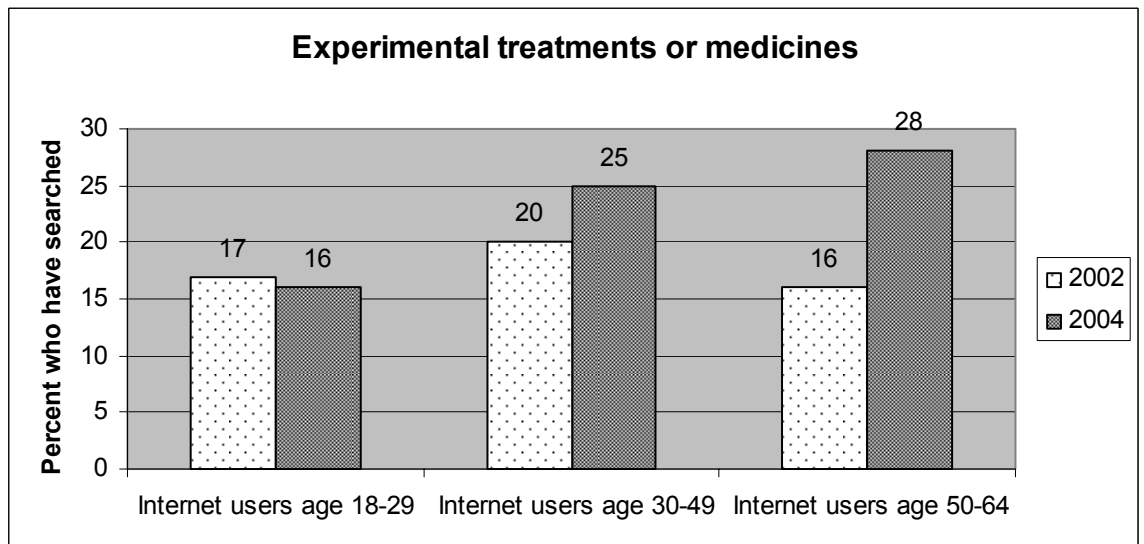


**Mental health**

Twenty-three percent of internet users have looked online for information about depression, anxiety, stress, or mental health issues, which is statistically the same as in 2002 when 21% of internet users reported doing this type of search. As in 2002, online women are more likely than online men to search for mental health information on the internet (26% vs. 19%).

**Experimental treatments**

Twenty-three percent of internet users have looked online for information about experimental treatments or medicines – a significant increase from 2002, when 18% of internet users reported looking for that type of material online.



Online women and online men report equal interest in this type of information, as they did in 2002. Three types of internet users showed statistically significant increases in searching for experimental treatments: those age 50-64 years old; those with college degrees; and those with six or more years of online experience. Twenty-eight percent of 50-64 year-olds with internet access said they have done this type of search, compared to 16% of the same age group in 2002. Thirty percent of internet users with a college degree have done so, compared to 20% of the same category in 2002. Twenty-eight percent of the most veteran internet users report doing this type of search, compared to 20% of that group in 2002.

### **Environmental health hazards**

Eighteen percent of internet users have looked online for information about environmental health hazards, which is statistically the same as in 2002 when 17% of internet users said they had researched this topic online. Internet users with broadband access at home are more likely to have searched for this information than those with dial-up access at home (23% vs. 14%). Internet users with six or more years of experience online are more likely than those with two to three years of experience online (22% vs. 7%).

### **Immunizations**

Sixteen percent of internet users have looked online for information about immunizations or vaccinations, which is statistically the same as in 2002 when 13% of internet users said they had researched this topic online. As in 2002, parents are more likely to have researched this topic than internet users who do not have children living at home (22% vs. 12%). Internet users with broadband access at home are more likely to have searched for this information than those with dial-up access at home (20% vs. 13%). Internet users with six or more years of experience online are more likely than those with two to three years of experience online (21% vs. 8%).

### **Sexual health**

Eleven percent of internet users have looked online for information about sexual health, which is statistically the same as in 2002 when 10% of internet users said they had researched this topic online. As in 2002, internet users between 18 and 29 years old are the most likely to have done this type of search (15% vs. 7% of 50-64 year-olds, for example).

### **Medicare and Medicaid**

Eleven percent of internet users have looked online for information about Medicare and Medicaid, which is statistically the same as in 2002 when 9% of internet users said they had researched this topic online. As in 2002, internet users age 65 and older are the most likely to have searched for information on these health coverage plans (21% vs. 5% of 18-29 year-olds, for example). In addition, 15% of internet users with six or more years



## Part 2. Health Topics

of online experience have done this type of search, compared to 5% of internet users with two or three years of experience.

### **Problems with drugs or alcohol**

Eight percent of internet users have looked online for information about problems with drugs or alcohol, exactly the same percentage as in 2002. As in 2002, internet users between 18 and 29 years old are more likely than older internet users to do this type of online research (13% vs. 7% of 30-49 year-old internet users, for example).

### **Smoking cessation**

Seven percent of internet users have looked online for information about smoking cessation, which is statistically the same as in 2002 when 6% of internet users said they had researched this topic online. Online women are twice as likely as online men to report doing this type of search (10% vs. 5%), which is new since 2002 when men and women reported equal interest in smoking cessation information online.

## Part 2. Health Topics

### Health Topics: 2004

In all, 79% of internet users have looked online for at least one of 16 health topics. Certain subgroups reported significantly higher interest in some topics and are marked in bold/blue type. For example, when compared to online men, online women reported significantly more interest in information about specific diseases, certain treatments, diet, mental health, and smoking cessation.

Health topic	All internet users (n=537)	Online women (n=274)	Online men (n=263)	18-29 (n=117)	30-49 (n=208)	50-64 (n=143)	HS grad (n=146)	Some college (n=142)	College grad (n=221)
Specific disease or medical problem	66%	<b>71%</b>	60%	56%	<b>70%</b>	<b>71%</b>	56%	<b>68%</b>	<b>74%</b>
Certain medical treatment or procedure	51	<b>57</b>	46	37	<b>58</b>	<b>58</b>	45	53	<b>58</b>
Diet, nutrition, vitamins, or nutritional supplements	51	<b>59</b>	43	47	55	54	47	50	56
Exercise or fitness	42	45	40	49	43	40	34	45	<b>47</b>
Prescription or over-the-counter drugs	40	43	36	32	42	46	35	41	44
Health insurance	31	31	30	24	<b>38</b>	28	22	32	<b>40</b>
Alternative treatments or medicines	30	33	27	21	<b>33</b>	<b>39</b>	22	32	<b>38</b>
A particular doctor or hospital	28	30	27	27	31	26	15	<b>26</b>	<b>42</b>
Depression, anxiety, stress, or mental health issues	23	<b>26</b>	19	21	<b>28</b>	16	19	22	27
Experimental treatments or medicines	23	24	21	16	25	<b>28</b>	16	23	<b>30</b>
Environmental health hazards	18	18	18	22	16	21	16	18	21
Immunizations or vaccinations	16	17	15	16	17	16	11	18	<b>20</b>
Sexual health information	11	11	11	15	11	7	10	8	14
Medicare or Medicaid	11	13	9	5	11	14	8	9	<b>16</b>
Problems with drugs or alcohol	8	9	7	13	7	6	5	11	8
How to quit smoking	7	<b>10</b>	5	11	8	4	7	5	9

Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project November 2004 Survey (N=537). Margin of error for the entire sample of internet users is +/- 4%. Margins of error for comparison of subgroups are higher. Significant differences between demographic groups are in bold type.

## Part 3.

### Implications for the Future

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#### **The Web is increasingly seen as an information resource.**

Previous research by the Pew Internet & American Life Project suggests that as people gain more experience using the internet, their use becomes more serious.<sup>2</sup> As a majority of the population moved online, expectations grew and an overwhelming number of internet users began to expect to find the health information they need online.<sup>3</sup>

There are many reasons why internet users might now be more likely to search for certain types of health information. Many health-related Web sites are supplying more content and that might be driving users toward certain topics. Government agencies' call for obesity awareness and public education about nutrition may be increasing public awareness and prompting more traffic. The pharmaceutical industry's marketing campaigns may be paying off in increased interest in their products. More Americans may be looking for good deals on health insurance or checking up on their hospital's quality ratings online. The clamor for experimental treatments may be growing as internet users become aware of the possibilities available to them.

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#### **Speed of access and years of online experience are among the key trends that may influence online health searching.**

Two ongoing trends in the internet population may reinforce some users' greater tendency to seek out certain health information online. There are now many more internet users with high-speed or broadband access at home. Additionally, there are many more internet users with six or more years of online experience.

In December 2002, 25% of users went online from home using a broadband connection and 72% used a dial-up connection. As of November 2004, 49% of internet users enjoy high-speed access to the internet at home, and 48% of internet users remain on dial-up connections at home. In all, 63% of internet users now have a fast connection at home or at work and 37% of internet users have only dial-up access.

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<sup>2</sup> Horrigan, John and Lee Rainie. "Getting Serious Online: As Americans Gain Experience, They Use the Web More at Work, Write Emails with More Significant Content, Perform More Online Transactions, and Pursue More Serious Activities." (Pew Internet & American Life Project: March 3, 2002. Available at: [http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/55/report\\_display.asp](http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/55/report_display.asp))

<sup>3</sup> Horrigan, John and Lee Rainie. "Counting on the Internet: Most expect to find key information online, most find the information they seek, many now turn to the Internet first." (Pew Internet & American Life Project: Dec. 29, 2002. Available at: [http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/80/report\\_display.asp](http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/80/report_display.asp)).

## Part 3. Implications for the Future

In previous research, the Pew Internet & American Life Project has found that broadband access changes the way internet users behave online.<sup>4</sup> Broadband users are likely to take part in seven online activities on a typical day, while a dial-up user takes part in three. Broadband users are more likely than dial-up users to turn first to the internet when they have a health question, rather than turning first to a doctor.<sup>5</sup> As high-speed connections proliferate, more internet users take advantage of the “always on” connection to take care of personal business, whether that includes banking,<sup>6</sup> communicating with colleagues and loved ones, or finding health-related information.

<b>Dial-up Users vs. Broadband Users: 2004</b>		
87% of internet users with high-speed access at home have searched for at least one health topic. 72% of internet users with dial-up access at home have done so. Broadband users exceed dial-up users in 8 specific topics.		
<b>Health Topic</b>	<b>Dial-up</b>	<b>Broadband</b>
Certain medical treatment or procedure	45%	60%
Diet, nutrition, vitamins, or nutritional supplements	46	59
Exercise or fitness	38	50
Health insurance	23	39
Alternative treatments or medicines	25	37
A particular doctor or hospital	19	41
Experimental treatments or medicines	18	29
Environmental health hazards	14	23

Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project November 2004 Survey (N for dial-up users=228; N for broadband users=230). Margin of error for comparing the two groups is +/- 8%.

In December 2002, 36% of internet users had been online for six years or more. As of November 2004, 55% of internet users had been online for that long. The Pew Internet Project has found that the longer someone has had access, the more likely they are to view the internet as a utility and to turn to it for all sorts of serious matters.<sup>7</sup> Sixty-six percent of internet users with just two or three years of online experience have looked online for information about at least one health topic, compared to 86% of internet users with six or more years of experience.

Since internet newcomers are scarce (just one in five users got access within the last three years), it is more illuminating to compare veteran users' change over time than to compare newbies to veterans.

<sup>4</sup> Horrigan, John and Lee Rainie. “The Broadband Difference: How online Americans' behavior changes with high-speed Internet connections at home.” (Pew Internet & American Life Project: June 23, 2002. Available at: [http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/63/report\\_display.asp](http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/63/report_display.asp))

<sup>5</sup> See “Counting on the Internet.”

<sup>6</sup> Fox, Susannah. “Online Banking 2005.” (Pew Internet & American Life Project: February 9, 2005. Available at: [http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/149/report\\_display.asp](http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/149/report_display.asp))

<sup>7</sup> See “Getting Serious Online.”

## Part 3. Implications for the Future

<b>Experienced Internet Users: 2002 vs. 2004</b>		
86% of internet users with 6+ years of online experience have searched for information on at least one major health topic, compared to 66% of users with 2-3 years of online experience. Veteran users report a spike of interest in five topics.		
<b>Health Topic</b>	<b>Veteran Users (6+ Years) Who Have Searched for Info on It (%)</b>	
	<b>2002</b>	<b>2004</b>
Diet, nutrition, vitamins, or nutritional supplements	49%	60%
Exercise or fitness	43	51
Health insurance	29	40
A particular doctor or hospital	26	37
Experimental treatments or medicines	20	28

Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project December 2002 Survey (N for subgroup=477); November 2004 Survey (N for subgroup=301). Margin of error for comparing the two samples is +/- 8%.

These “power users” may now turn to the internet not only when they have a pressing concern, but when they have an every-day sort of health question such as how to get fit, how to eat well, or to check if something is covered by their health insurance.

# Methodology

The November 2004 Activity Tracking Survey, sponsored by the Pew Internet and American Life Project, obtained telephone interviews with a nationally representative sample of 914 adults living in continental United States telephone households. The interviews were conducted in English by Princeton Data Source, LLC from November 23 to November 30, 2004. Statistical results are weighted to correct known demographic discrepancies. The margin of sampling error for the complete set of weighted data is  $\pm 3.4\%$ . The margin of sampling error for Internet users [n=537] is  $\pm 4.4\%$ .

Details on the design, execution and analysis of the survey are discussed in the questionnaire associated with this report.