

## “Cyberchondriacs” on the Rise?

*Those who go online for healthcare information continues to increase*

**New York, N.Y. — August 4, 2010** — The latest Harris Poll, measuring how many people use the Internet to look for information about health topics, finds that the numbers continue to increase. The Harris Poll first used the word Cyberchondriacs to describe these people in 1998, when just over 50 million American adults had ever gone online to look for health information. By 2005, that number had risen to 117 million. In the new poll, the number of Cyberchondriacs has jumped to 175 million from 154 million last year, possibly as a result of the health care reform debate. Furthermore, frequency of usage has also increased. Fully 32% of all adults who are online say they look for health information “often,” compared to 22% last year.

These are some of the results of ***The Harris Poll*** of 1,066 adults surveyed by telephone between July 13 and 18, 2010 by **Harris Interactive**.

Other findings in the new Harris Poll include:

- While the percentage of adults who go online (79%) has not changed significantly for several years, the proportion of those who are online and have ever used the Internet to look for health information has increased to 88% this year, **the highest number ever**.
- Fully 81% of all Cyberchondriacs have looked for health information online in the last month. And 17% have gone online to look for health information ten or more times in the last month. **On average, Cyberchondriacs do this about 6 times a month.**
- **Very few Cyberchondriacs are dissatisfied** with their ability to find what they want online. Only 9% report that they were somewhat (6%) or very (3%) unsuccessful. And only 8% believe that the information they found was unreliable.
- Just over half (53%) of all Cyberchondriacs report that they have **discussed information they found online with their doctors.**
- Half (51%) of all Cyberchondriacs say they have searched for information on the Internet **based on discussions with their doctors.**

### So what?

These findings show that, with every passing year, more and more people are using the Internet to look for health information and that the overwhelming majority of these Cyberchondriacs are finding what they want online.

**TABLE 1  
CYBERCHONDRIACS: TRENDS 1998—2010**

Base: All U.S. adults

	1998	1999	2001	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
All adults who are online*	38	46	63	67	69	74	77	79	76	79	<b>79</b>
All online adults who have ever looked online for health information	71	74	75	78	74	72	80	84	81	78	<b>88</b>
All adults who have ever looked online for health information	27	34	47	52	51	53	61	71	66	67	<b>76</b>
All adults who have looked online for health information in last month	NA	NA	27	NA	31	45	51	53	50	52	<b>62</b>
All adults who have ever looked online for health information + (millions)	<b>54</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>175</b>

\*Includes those online from home, office, school, library or other location

+ Based on July 2008 U.S. Census estimate released January 2009 (230,100,000 total U.S. adults aged 18 or over).

NA = Not Asked

**TABLE 2  
FREQUENCY OF ACCESSING HEALTH INFORMATION ONLINE: 1998—2010**

"How often do you look for information online about health topics – often, sometimes, hardly ever or never?"

Base: All U.S. adults who are online\*

	1998	1999	2001	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Often	12	13	16	17	19	25	21	26	25	22	<b>32</b>
Sometimes	30	30	30	37	31	33	40	40	38	35	<b>41</b>
Hardly ever	29	31	30	23	24	14	19	18	17	21	<b>15</b>
Never	29	26	25	22	26	29	20	16	19	22	<b>11</b>
<b>Total who have looked for health or medical information sometimes or often (NET)</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>Total who have ever looked for health or medical information (NET)</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>88</b>

Note: Percentages may not add up exactly to 100% due to rounding

\*Includes those online from home, office, school, library or other location

**TABLE 3**  
**FREQUENCY OF LOOKING FOR HEALTH INFORMATION IN LAST MONTH: 2001-2010**

"About how many times have you looked for information online about health topics in the last month?"

Base: Have ever looked for health information online

	2001	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Not once	40	NA	21	14	23	26	25	22	<b>17</b>
<b>1 or more (NET)</b>	58	NA	60	85	76	74	75	77	<b>81</b>
1 or 2 times	29	NA	26	31	35	30	31	33	<b>33</b>
3 – 5 times	17	NA	14	29	23	21	25	21	<b>26</b>
6 – 9 times	3	NA	5	6	5	8	5	6	<b>6</b>
10 or more times	9	NA	15	19	14	16	14	18	<b>17</b>
Not sure	2	NA	19	1	1	*	*	1	<b>2</b>
<b>Mean (average)</b>	3.0	NA	5.1	6.8	5.2	5.7	4.8	5.4	<b>6.0</b>
<b>Median</b>	1.1	NA	2.0	3.0	2	2	2	2	<b>2</b>

Note: Percentages may not add up exactly to 100% due to rounding.

NA = Not asked in 2003

**TABLE 4**  
**SUCCESS IN SEARCHING FOR INFORMATION ONLINE ABOUT HEALTH TOPICS: 2005-2010**

"How successful were you in your search for information online about health topics? Were you...?"

Base: Have ever looked for health information online

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
	%	%	%	%	%	%
<b>SUCCESSFUL (NET)</b>	89	88	88	89	83	<b>86</b>
Very successful	46	42	37	41	45	<b>41</b>
Somewhat successful	43	46	50	48	38	<b>45</b>
Neither successful nor unsuccessful	2	4	5	3	5	<b>4</b>
<b>UNSUCCESSFUL (NET)</b>	6	7	6	4	9	<b>9</b>
Somewhat unsuccessful	3	4	3	2	4	<b>6</b>
Very unsuccessful	3	3	3	2	4	<b>3</b>
Not sure/Decline to answer	3	1	1	4	4	<b>2</b>

Note: Percentages may not add up exactly to 100% due to rounding.

**TABLE 5**  
**RELIABILITY OF SEARCHING FOR INFORMATION ONLINE ABOUT HEALTH TOPICS: 2005-2010**

"How reliable do you believe this information is concerning health topics? Is it...?"

Base: Have ever looked for health information online

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
	%	%	%	%	%	%
<b>RELIABLE (NET)</b>	90	87	86	86	87	<b>85</b>
Very reliable	37	25	26	24	28	<b>23</b>
Somewhat reliable	53	61	60	62	59	<b>62</b>
Neither reliable nor unreliable	4	7	6	5	4	<b>5</b>
<b>UNRELIABLE (NET)</b>	5	5	7	6	7	<b>8</b>
Somewhat unreliable	3	5	6	4	4	<b>5</b>
Very unreliable	2	1	1	2	3	<b>2</b>
Not sure/Decline to answer	1	2	1	3	2	<b>2</b>

Note: Percentages may not add up exactly to 100% due to rounding.

**TABLE 6**  
**DISCUSSION WITH DOCTOR ABOUT INFORMATION FOUND ONLINE: 2005-2010**

"In the past year, have you ever discussed with your doctor the information you found online?"

Base: Have ever looked for health information online

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
	%	%	%	%	%	%
<b>Yes (NET)</b>	57	52	58	47	44	<b>53</b>
Yes, always do	15	13	12	13	7	<b>14</b>
Yes, sometimes do	25	21	22	15	22	<b>25</b>
Yes, have done once or twice	18	19	24	19	15	<b>15</b>
No, never do	43	48	42	53	56	<b>46</b>
Not sure/Decline to answer	*	*	*	*	*	<b>*</b>

Note: Percentages may not add up exactly to 100% due to rounding

\* Less than 0.5 percent.

**TABLE 7**  
**FREQUENCY OF SEARCHING MEDICAL INFORMATION ONLINE BASED ON**  
**DISCUSSION WITH DOCTOR: 2005-2010**

"Have you ever searched for medical information on the Internet based on a discussion with your doctor?"

Base: Have ever looked for health information online

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
	%	%	%	%	%	%
<b>Yes (NET)</b>	52	45	55	49	49	<b>51</b>
Yes, often	17	14	17	12	14	<b>17</b>
Yes, sometimes	36	31	38	38	35	<b>35</b>
No, never	48	55	45	50	51	<b>49</b>
Not sure/Decline to answer	*	*	*	*	*	<b>*</b>

Note: Percentages may not add up exactly to 100% due to rounding

\* Less than 0.5 percent.

## Methodology

This Harris Poll<sup>®</sup> was conducted by telephone within the United States between July 13 and 18, 2010 among 1,066 adults (aged 18 and over). Figures for age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, region, number of adults in the household, number of phone lines in the household were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including sampling error, coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments. Therefore, Harris Interactive avoids the words “margin of error” as they are misleading. All that can be calculated are different possible sampling errors with different probabilities for pure, unweighted, random samples with 100% response rates. These are only theoretical because no published polls come close to this ideal.

***These statements conform to the principles of disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.***

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***The Harris Poll<sup>®</sup> #95, August 4, 2010***

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