

READ THIS FIRST

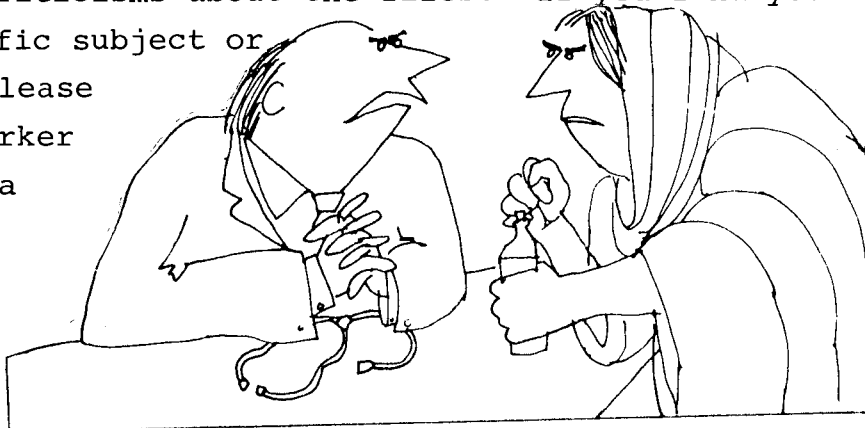
These files are a collection of articles and other written information from newspapers, magazines, medical journals, women's groups and other sources. We collect this information and keep it up-to-date so that you and other women can come in to look up a particular health problem or health issue of concern to you. The concept of "informed choice" in health care is bantered around a lot, but to make a real informed choice a woman has to have access to information. Many of us have been frustrated by how unavailable health information is, or by how information intended for the public tends to push us in a particular direction without giving us much to base our decision on.

We learn to treat our health by relying on a doctor to tell us what's wrong and to give us a remedy, usually in the form of drugs, or for more severe problems, surgery. In order to do this unquestioningly, we learn to suspend our own judgment and to trust in a medical expert to know more about our own bodies than we do. For us as women, it has also been a process of trusting that a male medical expert knows more about women's bodies than we or other women do.

Almost all of us have had experiences of being prescribed a harmful and expensive drug unnecessarily, of being railroaded into an unsafe method of contraception, or of not being informed about how to stay healthy and keep from getting ill again.

Looking up information for ourselves is one way that we can gain more control over our lives, by deciding for ourselves what kind of treatment best meets our needs, or, for instance, how we would like to plan a pregnancy and birth. Some of the files also deal with broader political issues, such as abortion, mental patients' rights, and occupational and environmental hazards.

We ask that you pass on to other women any information that you find helpful, and that you pass back to us any additional or more recent information that you have found elsewhere. We would also appreciate any constructive comments or criticisms about the files. If you find you need to know more about a specific subject or about health in general, please ask a health collective worker about getting involved in a health group or workshop.



"I know you keep catching it. Just keep on taking the medicine."