Tech ways to check on info in the news:

REMEMBER: If a "news item" makes you laugh, sad, angry, or tugs at your heart strings, be suspect of it. Make sure it really is news and not something to lead you astray. Reporting covers who, what, when, where and why, and if a news story is missing any of these, be suspicious.

Websites to help figure out what's true:

NEWSLITERACY PROJECT https://newslit.org/for-everyone/
NLP has customized a version of its e-learning platform, Checkology, for the public. People of all ages can now learn how to identify credible information, seek out reliable sources, and know what to trust, what to dismiss and what to debunk. Modeled on The Sift newsletter for educators, Get Smart About News is our new free newsletter designed for the general public. It explores timely examples of misinformation, addresses media and press freedom topics and discusses social media trends and issues.

MEDIAWISE FOR SENIORS https://www.poynter.org/mediawise-for-seniors/ teaches people key digital literacy skills to spot misinformation and disinformation so decisions can be based on facts, not fiction. As they state "We believe that when facts prevail, democracy wins." This site has a learning course called MediaWise for Seniors which is free and you can go at your own learning pace. I found it very informative.

AARP FACT CHECKER recommends these to investigate what you've read, seen or heard:
- PolitiFact.com
- FactCheck.org
- Snopes.com
- LeadStories.com
- ScienceFeedback.co
- CheckYourFact.com
- poynter.org/CoronavirusFactsAlliance

A more complete list of what to check than what appears in our newsletter:
The byline
Do a web search for the writer's name, says Cristina Tardáguila, associate director of the International Fact-Checking Network. If a common name, add "journalist" or "writer" to the search. (No author cited? That's an immediate red flag, she notes.) The writer's articles should appear in the search results, along with a LinkedIn profile or a verified Twitter account. You'll tell quickly if this author has credibility.
The headline
"Seventy percent of people don't read beyond the headline on articles they share," says Emily Bell, founding director of the Tow Center for Digital Journalism at Columbia University. Manipulators use that to their advantage by creating clickbait headlines that distort a story's truth. Read the whole story before liking it or sharing it (or believing it).
The sources
Research an article's sources, says Jon Greenberg, senior correspondent at the fact-checking site PolitiFact. A quick search can reveal whether people, studies, surveys or reports that provide evidence for the news story have political or business affiliations. Having these affiliations can be fine, but you'll benefit from knowing who and what they are.
The call to action

If there is language urging you to take some action — send money, join an organization, share the report or simply “click this link” — be highly cautious, Bell notes. Reporting should provide facts and insight, and be clear in its intent and transparent in its sourcing. Articles that sell or promote something often are not truly unbiased; a fervent push to have you click on a link could even signal fraud.

The blue badge

Social media platforms — such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter — indicate legitimate accounts with a checkmark. If the verified badge appears next to the name on the profile and next to the account name in the search results, it means the platform has confirmed that the account is authentic and run by the public figure or organization cited.

The pictures

Altered or completely fake photos and videos are common in the disinformation realm. Use “reverse-image searches” if you suspect a faked photo, Tardáguila says. Drag and drop a photo into Google Image search, for example, and it will spit out information for that image, such as its original source, when it first appeared and more.

The coverage

Legitimate news stories rarely show up on just one site, says Alex Mahadevan, senior multimedia reporter at the Poynter Institute's MediaWise project. He encourages lateral reading — consulting other news sources to see if they have similar stories or information.

The formatting

Facebook notes that “many false news sites have misspellings or awkward layouts.” If you see these, be dubious. Most legitimate news providers edit and groom content before publishing.

The dates

This spring, a poem went viral that was supposedly written in the late 1800s, but it had the perfect sentiment and messages for today. Turns out it was written in March 2020, as anyone who consulted Snopes.com or other fact-checking web services would have discovered.

The reporting

Is it really news you are reading, or is it opinion or advocacy? Reporting covers the who, what, when, where and why. If a news story is missing any of these, be suspicious, Tardáguila says. Ask yourself: “Who wrote and shared this? What is its goal? When was it created? Where is it getting its information from? Why am I getting this now?"